

THE STRAITS TIMES

Life Singer
Eve Ai digs
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buildings that
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for a picture of
love and marriage
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Business Gender diversity
in S'pore workplace C1



S'pore repeats call for Malaysia to withdraw vessels after collision

Persistent presence of KL vessels poses threat to safety of navigation in area: MFA

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

Singapore has reiterated its call for Malaysia to withdraw its vessels from Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas, following a collision between Greek carrier Pireas and a Malaysian government vessel, Polaris, on Saturday.

"The persistent presence of its vessels clearly poses a threat to safety of navigation in the area," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in a statement yesterday. "As we have

said previously, Malaysia will be responsible for any untoward situations on the ground that arise from continued deployment of its vessels into this area."

In a separate statement, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said Pireas was making a manoeuvre to leave the area when it collided with Polaris.

Polaris, a Malaysian Marine Department vessel, is one of the vessels that trespassed into Singapore's waters off Tuas last year. It was anchored when the accident occurred.

MPA added that Pireas was al-

lowed to carry on to its next port of call – which was in Malaysia – as the accident was "not considered a very serious marine casualty incident" under the International Maritime Organisation Marine Casualty Investigation Code.

Pireas had been refuelling at Singapore's eastern bunkering anchorage, which lies south of Bedok. After doing so, it informed MPA that it was headed for Tanjung Pelepas in Johor, said the authority.

At 1.55pm, Pireas entered Singapore's port limits off Tuas.

"It then slowed down, changed direction and collided with Polaris," MPA said. The accident happened at around 2.30pm.

Upon establishing contact with Pireas, MPA's Port Operations Con-

trol Centre instructed the Greece-registered vessel to stay clear of the area, MPA said. "At this point, Pireas reported that prior to contacting (the control centre), it had collided with Polaris and there was no damage to its vessel."

The crew members of both vessels were not injured. Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Saturday night that the Greek vessel and its crew have been detained.

On Oct 25 last year, Malaysia unilaterally gazetted altered port limits that went beyond its past claims. In response, Singapore extended its port limits off Tuas to the full extent of its territorial waters.

As Saturday's accident occurred in Singapore's territorial waters, MPA launched investigations immedi-

ately, it said. It has sent official notifications to Malaysia's Marine Department and Greece's Hellenic Bureau for Marine Casualties Investigation. It is also gathering and reviewing information – such as vessel records and video footage of the collision – and has requested a formal incident report from both vessels.

MPA has also contacted the Greek vessel's agent in Singapore to assist with investigations.

"We advise the shipping community to ensure that vessels operating within Singapore Port Limits comply with the applicable regulations, including reporting their movements and to anchor only within designated anchorages," it said.

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Fake-degree scandal in PH coalition grows

Two Malaysian government ministers, one deputy minister and two other top state officials, all from the ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition, have been accused of having fake educational qualifications.

They are Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu, Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin, Deputy Foreign Minister Marzuki Yahya, Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sapian and Perak executive councillor Paul Yong Choo Kiong.

The scandal is particularly embarrassing as the PH has always prided itself as a government of high integrity.

While in opposition previously, it called out several leaders from the then ruling Barisan Nasional coalition – including former deputy foreign minister A. Kohilan Pillay and former deputy foreign minister Richard Riot Jaem – for allegedly possessing credentials from dubious educational institutions.

The revelation over Datuk Marzuki's academic qualifications led the public to independently check up on other PH leaders.

Mr Marzuki, who claimed he had a degree from Britain's University of Cambridge via a distance learning programme, admitted last Wednesday that it was actually from Cambridge International University, a suspected degree mill in the United States.

SEE WORLD A9

US-backed forces push to end ISIS caliphate

Fierce fighting was under way yesterday to retake the last shred of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group's "caliphate" in eastern Syria, as Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters backed by a US-led coalition began a push to retake the village of Baghuz.

Heavy clashes were taking place between the two sides, according to a war monitor.

United States-backed fighters have whittled down ISIS' territory to a patch of just 4km on the eastern banks of the Euphrates, with up to 600 extremists – most of them foreigners – believed to be holed up inside.

The assault was delayed for more than a week to allow more than 20,000 civilians to be evacuated to camps.

SEE WORLD A12



Spectators being thrilled by the fireworks display on the final night of this year's River Hongbao. The finale was themed Harmony Night. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

River Hongbao draws 1.35 million visitors over eight days

Rahimah Rashith

The curtain has come down on the River Hongbao celebrations, which drew 1.35 million visitors over eight nights of festivities.

River Hongbao, which has been part of Singapore's Chinese New Year festivities since 1987, was held at The Float@Marina Bay.

Large crowds, which included Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, showed up at the finale last night, themed Harmony Night.

Various groups, including students from Hua Yi Secondary School, Singapore Polytechnic and Kebun Baru Community Club's dikir barat group, took to the stage to perform.

Visitors saw zodiac animal lanterns and a giant God of Fortune lantern as well as a wishing well in the shape of Suntec City's Fountain of Wealth.

The final flourish will not be easy to top – a 10-minute fireworks display by Chinese company Tang Hua Fireworks, which has 30 years of experience at major events, in-

cluding the Beijing and London Olympic Games.

Award-winning artists from Australia, China, Italy and the United States lit up the Singapore skyline with fireworks over the previous nights.

This year's attendance was a whisker shy of recent years'. River Hongbao drew 1.45 million visitors last year and 1.4 million in 2017. But they were also longer, running over 11 and 10 nights respectively.

Mrs Joanne Choo, who visited the festival with her husband and two-month-old daughter last

night, said the event is an opportunity to bond with her family.

Said the 26-year-old housewife, who visits the festival every year: "I enjoyed the performances. There were food stalls too, all kinds of aromas were wafting over to my nose. There were fun rides for children as well."

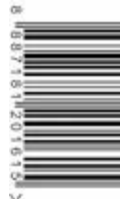
Engineer Clement Lee, 46, who was at the festival with his wife, said that the zodiac lanterns were a yearly highlight for him. "The festival is a chance for us to immerse (ourselves) in our heritage," he said.

Mr Ang Wei Neng, chairman of

the River Hongbao organising committee, who is an MP for Jurong GRC, said that the hard work of organising the event has paid off.

"What is most satisfying is when I walk around and talk to people, to see many first-time visitors who say they want to return next year, and the happy faces of young children, teenagers, young adults, parents and grandparents as well as a diverse array of visitors from different countries – it makes it all worth it," he said.

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10 must-reads for today

1 Close win for Slingers

The Singapore Slingers got off to a flying start – leading the Saigon Heat 24-19 after the first quarter and 47-24 at half-time. But coach Neo Beng Siang had to endure a “nightmare” before his side won the Asean Basketball League (ABL) game 76-70 to leapfrog the visitors into third place in the standings. **SPORT C7**



Saigon Heat's Dang Khoa Tran fending off Singapore Slingers' Xavier Alexander in yesterday's ABL game at OCBC Arena. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

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VIDEO

Looking back 200 years

Key milestones in Singapore's history come alive in 200 seconds, through the use of rare pictures from as far back as 1819. Among them is the earliest surviving drawing of Singapore. <http://str.sg/200yrs>



INTERACTIVE

A journey up north

The Hong Kong-Beijing high-speed rail travels through eight stations in its nine-hour journey. Unearth the sights and stories of the cities, past and new. <http://str.sg/hk-beijing-hsr>

2 Withdraw vessels: S'pore

Singapore has reiterated its call for Malaysia to withdraw its vessels from Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas, following a collision between Greek carrier Pireas and a Malaysian government vessel, Polaris, on Saturday. “The persistent presence of its vessels clearly poses a threat to safety of navigation in the area,” said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Crown and state separate

Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn's announcement quashing the nomination of his elder sister Ubolratana Rajakanya as a prime ministerial candidate boils down to the one key aspect of the role and moral authority of the Thai monarchy – separation from politics. **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

4 India's fast-greying south

India is often said to be in a sweet spot demographically, with half of its population under 25 and two-thirds below 35. But this rosy picture overlooks an emerging problem, with the number of people growing old in the southern part of the country increasing more rapidly than in the north. **WORLD A11**

5 Challenge to Aussie MPs

Ms Zali Steggall, a former Olympian known as one of Australia's best-ever alpine skiers, has set herself a new challenge: to defeat former prime minister Tony Abbott in the upcoming federal election. She is not alone, with a range of high-profile independents seeking to take on the ruling Liberal-National coalition. **WORLD A13**

6 Nuclear arms race brewing

A new nuclear arms race looms, with the United States pulling out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, says global affairs correspondent Jonathan Eyal (below). **OPINION A15**



7 3,500 renters buy HDB flats

About 600 rental flat tenants become home owners each year on average, the HDB disclosed yesterday. It said 3,500 such tenants bought a flat in the Build-To-Order or Sale of Balance Flats exercises from 2013 to last year. **HOME B3**

8 Temple damaged in blaze

The Singapore Civil Defence Force is investigating a fire at a temple in Tampines on Saturday morning, the fifth day of Chinese New Year. The blaze at the Taoist Poh Ann Keng Temple badly damaged its front hall, prayer altar and several statuettes (right). The temple dates back more than 80 years although it has shifted many times. **HOME B6**



PHOTO: SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS

9 Courts Asia in the red

Courts Asia, the target of a buy offer from Japanese electronics retailer Nojima, has posted a \$171,000 loss for its financial third quarter. **BUSINESS C3**

10 First Grammy nomination

British musician Jon Hopkins has received his first Grammy nomination for Best Dance/Electronic Album for Singularity. But he says he will not be attending the ceremony in Los Angeles as he is currently on the Australian leg of his global tour. He performs in Singapore on Wednesday. **LIFE D7**

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Smart Finance	2 days	3-4 Apr; 27-28 Jun
Smart Manufacturing	2 days	9-10 Apr; 2-3 Jun
Smart Logistics	2 days	21-22 Mar; 19-20 Jun

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For enquiries, please contact Mr Poon Yew Keong at 6808 5457 or email tis@smu.edu.sg.

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News analysis

King's order underscores key aspect of Thai monarchy

His elder sister's nomination as PM candidate would have blurred a critical red line



Nirmal Ghosh

Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn's Feb 8 announcement quashing the nomination of his elder sister Ubolratana Rajakanya as the prime ministerial candidate of the Thai Raksa Chart Party goes to the essence of one key aspect of the role and moral authority of the Thai monarchy – separation from politics.

Princess Ubolratana's royal status has been the subject of much quibbling because of her personal history. Last week, she described herself as a commoner. But the King's announcement made it clear that she is a princess.

Her nomination was on the basis of her own interest, according to the Thai Raksa Chart Party which is backed by former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. It was a potential masterstroke. The army would have likely found it difficult to unseat a government led by a royal. "It will be the end of colour-coded conflict," exulted one party member.

Princess Ubolratana's nomination also challenged the binary view of Thailand's political conflict, potentially blurring the division between red and yellow

that has afflicted the country for more than a decade.

But it would have blurred more than that. It would have blurred a critical red line for the monarchy – non-involvement in politics.

The Thai monarchy is, on paper, a constitutional monarchy that is officially above politics. Whether this is in practice is argued by scholars and analysts, both Thai and foreign.

"The official position... has not always been observed or respected," said Dr Thongchai Winichakul, senior researcher at the Japan External Trade Organisation's Institute of Developing Economics.

University of Washington's Professor Emeritus Charles Keyes said: "It's never been quite true."

Notwithstanding this, the announcement by the King, which in the kingdom cannot be challenged, clearly reiterates that particular official red line.

"Members of the Royal Family... close to the person of the Monarch" fall under the "rule requiring the Monarch to be above politics and to be politically neutral", it said.

It added that such members of the royal family would not be permitted to hold any political office because that would "violate not only the spirit of the Constitution, but also the established conventions of government under the rubric of constitutional monarchy".

The King's announcement stated: "Any attempt to involve a high-level member of the Royal

If Princess Ubolratana's nomination were allowed to stand, it would have compromised the official separation of monarchy from politics, which is an essential component of the monarchy's moral authority. Rendered untenable, it would be a slippery slope for the monarchy itself.

Family in the political process – by whatever means, would be tantamount to breaching time-honoured royal traditions, customs and national culture.

"Such action must be deemed transgression and most inappropriate."

If Princess Ubolratana's nomination were allowed to stand, it would have compromised the official separation of monarchy from politics, which is an essential component of the monarchy's moral authority. Rendered untenable, it would be a slippery slope for the monarchy itself.

Thaksin, the populist leader who fled into exile as a fugitive after being sentenced for corruption, has run afoul of the royalist establishment before.

Part of the rationale claimed by

the army for the 2006 coup d'etat that removed his government was that he had shown disrespect for the monarchy. Ahead of the 2011 election that brought his sister Yingluck Shinawatra to power, royalists openly worried that he wanted to abolish the monarchy.

Thaksin's unprecedented popularity – he won landslide election victories in 2001 and 2004 – made elected authority a threat to what Dr Thongchai calls Thailand's "royal democracy", meaning a parliamentary democracy with the elected authority that is in fact "under the influence and active supervision of monarchists".

"The coup in 2006 was an attempt to secure royalist political dominance by curbing growing popular democracy," said Dr Thongchai.

The particular dynamics of what transpired, and why, in the less than 24 hours on Friday between

the Thai Raksa Chart Party's official nomination of the King's elder sister, and his announcement scuttling it, may never be known.

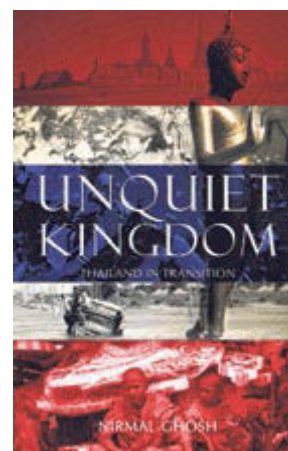
Speculation as usual is rife, partly because the relatively opaque nature of the monarchy, its insulation from criticism and its official hands-off position on politics lend itself to chatter, much of which may be entirely baseless.

Certainly, nominating Princess Ubolratana as the Thai Raksa Chart's candidate for prime minister was audacious, stunning everyone who knows how Thailand's unique power structure with the monarchy at its apex works. And while, in theory, proceeding with the nomination could have led to a new experiment in political reconciliation, in reality, it was a bridge too far.

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Portraits of the late Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej (left) and current King Maha Vajiralongkorn near the Grand Palace in Bangkok. The Thai monarchy is, on paper, a constitutional monarchy that is officially above politics.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Tensions between the Shinawatra family and the royalist establishment date back to 2006. Read the details of Thailand's complexities in the book *Unquiet Kingdom* by Nirmal Ghosh, former Indochina bureau chief for The Straits Times.

<https://stbooks.sg/products/unquiet-kingdom-a-journalist-in-thailand>

Activist seeks dissolution of party which nominated princess

BANGKOK • The Thai political party that nominated a princess as its candidate for prime minister could be banned from a general election next month, after an activist said yesterday he would file a petition seeking its dissolution.

Thailand's Election Commission is to meet today to consider the candidacy of Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya, 67, who stunned the nation last Friday when she said she would be the prime ministerial candidate for a populist party loyal to ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

Her announcement drew a swift rebuke from King Maha Vajiralongkorn, the princess' younger brother, who issued a statement hours later saying it was "inappropriate" for members of the royal family to enter politics. The March 24 election is the first since a military coup in 2014 toppled an elected pro-Thaksin government.

The current junta leader, Mr Prayut Chan-o-cha, is also contesting the election for prime minister as the candidate of a pro-military party.

The nomination of the King's el-



der sister, who has starred in soap operas and an action movie and gave up her royal titles after marrying an American, was a shocking

move by forces loyal to Thaksin, who face an uphill battle in the election.

The Election Commission has un-

til Friday to rule on the princess' candidacy.

"Whether it is dissolving the party or slapping punitive punish-

An activist said he would file a petition to disqualify the Thai Raksa Chart Party, which nominated Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya (left) as its candidate for prime minister in the upcoming general election. The political party is linked to ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

ments on the party, we will discuss all that on Monday," a senior member of the commission told DPA on condition of anonymity.

It is unlikely its members would disregard the wishes of the King, who – while a constitutional monarch – is considered semi-divine in Thai society.

Yesterday, an activist said he would file a petition to disqualify the Thai Raksa Chart Party, which nominated the princess.

"The royal announcement made it clear that the party violated electoral law," Mr Srisuwan Janya, secretary-general of the Association for the Protection of the Constitution, said.

Mr Srisuwan said his complaint to the Election Commission would ask it to recommend that a Constitutional Court dissolve the party.

Thai Raksa Chart's executive chairman Chaturon Chaisaeng declined to comment on the request to disband it.

The party said in a statement on Saturday that it "graciously accepts" the King's message and would abide by election regulations and royal tradition.

The royal family has a longstanding tradition of staying out of politics, and electoral law forbids parties from using the monarchy in campaigns.

Parties loyal to former telecommunications tycoon Thaksin have defeated pro-establishment parties to win every election since 2001. However, since 2006, all of the elected governments have been removed from power by court rulings or coups.

The gambit to nominate a member of the royal family could backfire on Thai Raksa Chart, said Dr Titipol Phakdeewanich, dean of the faculty of political science at Ubon Ratchathani University.

"Things are now more unpredictable," Dr Titipol told Reuters.

With the princess seemingly out of the race, the opposition, backed by Thaksin, will need a new figurehead to galvanise its electorate to shake the junta's grip on power.

If the party is dissolved, it could give more seats to anti-Thaksin affiliated parties like the pro-junta Phalang Pracharat and progressive Future Forward party, he said.

REUTERS, DPA

Thaksin tweets: Cheer up! Life must go on!

BANGKOK • Former Thai leader Thaksin Shinawatra made his first public comments following a week of unprecedented drama involving

a party linked to him and the royal family.

The party, Thai Raksa Chart, saw its bid last Friday to nominate

Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya for prime minister in next month's general election rapidly unravel when her brother, King

Maha Vajiralongkorn, issued a rare royal command opposing the move.

Thaksin posted a short message on his Twitter account late on Saturday, saying, "Chin up and keep moving forward! We learn from past experiences but live for today and the future. Cheer up!

Life must go on!"

The events over the past few days have shocked Thailand, where top royals are officially accorded semi-divine status and protected by a strict lese majeste law that shields them from criticism.

Thaksin or his allies have won every election dating back to 2001,

but they have been unseated by the courts or the military each time since 2006.

Thaksin lives in exile, but parties linked to him have been preparing for the March 24 election, which comes after almost five years of military rule.

BLOOMBERG

Forum to discuss how US, Asean can tackle challenges

Experts and young leaders from both sides gather for event in Jakarta

Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

The challenges confronting the United States and Asean – including natural disasters, the scourge of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), maritime tensions and rising populism – and how both sides can work together to overcome them will be discussed at a forum beginning today.

More than 70 experts, foreign policy specialists and young leaders from the US and South-east Asia will gather in Jakarta for the three-day US-Asean Partnership Forum which marks 42 years of close ties between them.

It is organised by the Pacific Forum, a Honolulu-based foreign policy research institute, in partnership with the Habibie Centre, a Jakarta-based think-tank, and supported by the US Mission to Asean.

The forum will also look at other wide-ranging issues, such as development and economic integration, and innovative ways to deepen co-operation, tackle common challenges and take the US-Asean relationship forward.

“Asean has become and remains the lead convener in the Indo-Pacific region,” said Pacific Forum president Robert Girrier.

“Our hope is that this forum will result in innovative and actionable policy recommendations that can facilitate movement towards a more peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.”

The Indo-Pacific concept itself, which is still in need of clarity, will come up for discussion at the forum.

And with election fever gripping South-east Asia, the hot topic of democracy in the region will be the subject of a panel discussion chaired by Mr Ravi Velloor, associate editor of The Straits Times, on Wednesday.

The Straits Times is one of the forum’s media partners.

Young leaders from diverse fields will get the chance to have their say, and rub shoulders with officials and senior experts.

At another session on Wednesday, these young leaders will discuss the fates and futures of the US and Asean, and give their take on how both sides can work together to overcome challenges and deepen ties.

The 25 participants from the Pacific Forum Young Leaders Programme will also attend a dialogue on US policy towards Asean hosted by the US Mission to Asean today, and will take part in a roundtable discussion with Mr Kung Phoak, an Asean deputy secretary-general, and other senior officials at the Asean Secretariat.

Mr Kung is in charge of the Asean Socio-Cultural Community, overseeing the implementation of projects that focus on forging a common identity and building an inclusive society.

It is the largest and most diverse delegation of young leaders that the Pacific Forum has included in any senior-level regional dialogue in the past five years at least.

And they have come armed with great expectations and ideas, and eager to start discussions on a broad swathe of topics, from infrastructure to trade.

This will be Ubon Ratchathani University lecturer Piyanat Soikham’s first direct engagement with US foreign policy. The 30-year-old from Thailand, whose academic focus is India-Asean rela-

tions, is hoping to explore the significance of the Indo-Pacific strategy, which he believes will enhance US-Asean collaboration.

Mr Deepu Nair, noting that the US recently announced a joint infrastructure financing programme with Australia and Japan, is looking forward to discussing the US’ role in infrastructure development for the Asean region.

“It remains to be seen if the initiative can be an effective counterweight to China’s One Belt, One Road,” said the 31-year-old from Singapore, who works as a management consultant at Frost & Sullivan. He was referring to the Belt and

Road Initiative, China’s development strategy to revive ancient sea and land trade routes linking Africa, Europe and Asia.

“In any case, the announcement is a welcome development for many Asean countries that suffer from large financing gaps for their infrastructure needs. More competition can only lead to better terms for these nations,” he added.

The young leaders are optimistic about the positive momentum in US-Asean ties, but hope to see more done to strengthen these bonds.

Mr Jeremy Danz, a master’s candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the US, said the

US must continue to commit diplomatic resources, among other things, to maintain relationships with the Asean nations. The appointment of a new US ambassador to Asean – there has not been a full-fledged ambassador since 2017 – would be a good start, said the 29-year-old.

Mr Sithy Rath Daravuth, 24, a lecturer of international studies at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, suggested that US President Donald Trump conduct visits to more South-east Asian countries this year to further consolidate bilateral ties.

During the forum, Ms Catherine Setiawan, 29, from Indonesia, hopes to share her thoughts on the US’ decision to withdraw from trade pacts like the Trans-Pacific Partnership and how this might hinder its relationship with Asean countries.

The regulatory reform adviser added: “I’m excited to hear the experts’ views on US-Asean relations in the future, what the challenges are, and how to improve the relationship.”

“I also can’t wait to meet and connect with young leaders from the US and Asean countries, and listen to their opinions on improving ties.”

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• Read more views of the young leaders taking part in the US-Asean Partnership Forum at www.straitstimes.com



An evacuee who had to flee the months-long siege on Marawi by supporters of ISIS, at an evacuation site in Saguwaran town in December 2017. The scourge of ISIS is one of the challenges that will be discussed at the forum. ST FILE PHOTO

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50,000 to < 200,000	0.38	1.52		1.62	
200,000 to 3 million	0.50	1.40		1.50	

Fresh Funds Deposit in Prestige Savings Account (S\$)	Base Rates (% p.a.)	January 2019		February 2019	
		Bonus Rates (% p.a.)	Total Rate* (% p.a.)	Bonus Rates (% p.a.)	Total Rate* (% p.a.)
20,000 to < 200,000	0.38	1.62	2.00	1.72	2.10
200,000 to 5 million	0.50	1.50		1.60	

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With election fever gripping South-east Asia, the hot topic of democracy in the region will be the subject of a panel discussion chaired by Mr Ravi Velloor, associate editor of The Straits Times, on Wednesday.

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Just 5 in 100 persons here with disabilities have jobs

Rate among lowest in developed nations; industry experts say more can be done

Janice Tai
Social Affairs Correspondent

Having a disability is testing enough but there is an added challenge for those affected in Singapore – getting a job.

Only an estimated five out of every 100 people with disabilities here are employed, based on calculations by The Straits Times. At just 4.9 per cent, the rate is one of the lowest among developed societies.

For instance, 18.7 per cent of the disabled in the United States were employed, as of 2017. In Britain, Germany and Australia, the figure stood at over 40 per cent as of 2010 while Japan's hovered around 20 per cent, said a report last year by the International Labour Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

And there is an intensely human side to these statistics, as Dr Dawnjoy Leong can attest to.

The 53-year-old, who has autism, has been trying to find a teaching job for the last two years but to no avail. She returned to Singapore from Australia in late 2016 after having completed her PhD in autism and neurodiversity.

"I think the main reason for the difficulty in getting a job is because I disclose to employers my autism. My friends who do not do so are able to land jobs," said Dr Leong, who is now setting up a consultancy instead.

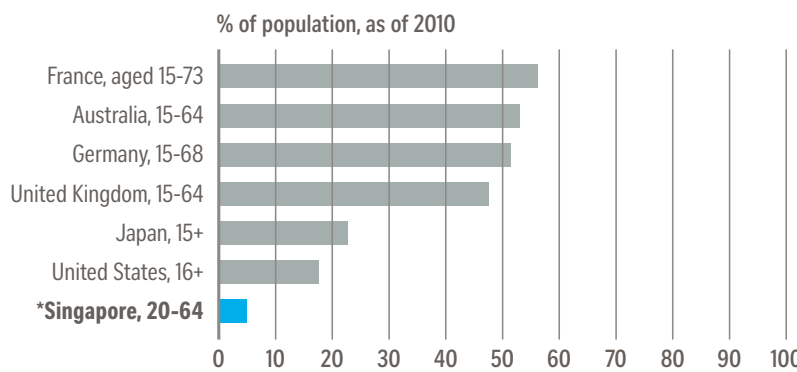
This is the first time an estimate of the employment rate for the disabled in Singapore has been arrived at.

The official employment rate for the disabled in Singapore has not been released, though Nominated MP Anthea Ong asked for it as part of a Parliament question last November.

In its reply then, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) said that over 8,600 persons with disabilities (PWDs) were hired in the private and public sectors in 2017.

This was out of a pool of 176,000 PWDs who were in the working-age range of 20 to 64, as tabulated based on the ministry's estimates of the prevalence of disability

Persons with disabilities who are employed



NOTE: *Singapore's rate of 4.88% is calculated based on 8,600 persons with disabilities (PWDs) employed in the public and private sectors in 2017, out of a population of 175,973 PWDs who were aged 20 to 64 years old in 2017, tabulated according to MSF's estimates of the prevalence of disability among different age cohorts in the resident population.

Sources: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO), ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD), MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

among different age cohorts in the resident population.

When contacted, MSF did not respond to The Straits Times' calculations but said some employers may have negative perceptions about PWDs, thinking they are less pro-

ductive or that hiring them would require too much resources.

This need not be so, said the ministry, pointing to some companies that have accommodated PWDs.

Given the estimated employment rate, economists and indus-

try experts say that the message is clear – much more can and should be done.

Mr Richard Kuppusamy, president of the Disabled People's Association, said that the estimated rate is below expectations, especially given the healthy number of subsidies and incentives that the Government offers employers such as through the Open Door Programme, the scheme that gives grants to companies that hire PWDs.

One reason for Singapore's dismal showing could be the different definitions of disability here and elsewhere.

Labour economist Walter The-seira noted that the US, for instance, has a broader definition of what constitutes disability – for instance, repetitive stress injury or psychological disorders – "whereas we may be more used to disability meaning missing limbs or severe impairment".

Other barriers – from psychological to infrastructural – block more from working.

Mr Sim Kang Wei, 29, who has cerebral palsy, said the greatest challenge is how quickly employers pre-judge PWDs.

"Some common myths are that we need to have a guardian with us all the time, or that we need special care and the company needs to have ramps," said Mr Sim, who works in social service. This is his second job since he graduated with a counselling degree in 2016.

"Employers need to look at us as persons with skills and knowledge first as opposed to an inconvenience, or worse still, using the disability as a basis for not hiring."

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Hiring persons with disabilities: Quota won't work, says MSF

An employment quota to get more people with disabilities into the workforce will not work in Singapore, says the Government.

Such a system would introduce labour market inflexibility and invite competing calls for quotas for other segments of the workforce, such as for ethnic minorities, said a spokesman for the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

Employment quotas for the disabled have been imposed by a number of countries, from Japan and South Korea to Thailand and most of the European Union.

In Japan, for instance, the government must fill 2.5 per cent of its workforce with people with disabilities. Private sector businesses must meet a quota of 2.2 per cent.

Thai law requires that public and private organisations hire one disabled person for every 100 workers.

In Singapore, those with disabilities comprise just 0.55 per cent of the resident labour force, according to the MSF in 2017.

But the ministry said quotas would not work here. "Companies may also just offer menial or low-paying jobs to meet the quota, without gainfully employing persons with disabilities to the best of their abilities," said the MSF spokesman.

"Like many of us, the challenges faced by persons with disabilities during their journey towards employment could be unique to their circumstances, as this is dependent on the individual's readiness, their prospective employers' expectation as well as macro-economic conditions."

Some charities are equally wary of introducing quotas.

"Legislating some form of employment quota is an option but it may increase costs for companies and they may in turn pass down some of these costs to the customers," said Ms Rebecca Tan, deputy general manager at Bizlink Centre, a non-profit organisation that helps people with disabilities with finding work.



Having employment quotas would not work as firms could just offer menial or low-paying jobs to meet the quota, "without gainfully employing persons with disabilities to the best of their abilities", said a spokesman for the Ministry of Social and Family Development.
ST FILE PHOTO

"But I think it is also time to review the open door fund and special employment credit schemes that the Government has implemented since they don't seem to be very effective. Perhaps other incentives like tax rebates for employers can be considered," she said, referring to the Open Door Programme, the scheme that gives grants to firms that hire persons with disabilities.

A spokesman for the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (Minds) said using more incentives, or the carrot rather than the stick, would be more effective in ensuring people with disabilities are meaningfully engaged at work.

"The organisations hiring them, and the corresponding work environments, have to be authentically embracing of them," said the Minds spokesman.

Otherwise, employers may just find a way around such rules. Last year, the Japanese government was found to have inflated the number of disabled people in its employ by 3,460 so as to meet the legal quota.

Other charities such as the Singa-

pore Association for the Deaf (SaDeaf) and SPD, an organisation that helps people with disabilities, said Singapore can study the different quota models in various countries and explore what would work best here.

Nominated MP Anthea Ong, who runs a social enterprise that hires deaf people and those recovering from mental health conditions, said Singapore should commit to a meaningful employment target for those with disabilities by a certain time.

"By meaningful, I mean it is not just about the quantity of jobs but also the quality to ensure that we continue to disincentivise discrimination and incentivise employers to retain and upgrade them for the future of work," she said.

Bizlink Centre's Ms Tan said private sector employers can also help by giving priority to hiring the disabled living near their businesses.

The silver lining in Singapore is that people with disabilities who are already in work do not seem to face major issues of discrimination.

The Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (Tafep) received close to 1,800 complaints on workplace issues from 2014 to November 2018 but only four were allegations of discrimination against people with disabilities.

Its spokesman said: "Tafep found no evidence of discrimination. Rather, most of the issues raised were due to poor communication and lack of sensitivity when working with persons with disabilities. All the four firms heeded Tafep's advice to make improvements."

There is reason for Singapore to do better. A recent US study has shown for the first time that firms that championed people with disabilities

INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The challenges faced by persons with disabilities during their journey towards employment could be unique to their circumstances, as this is dependent on the individual's readiness, their prospective employers' expectation as well as macro-economic conditions.



A MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT SPOKESMAN

specifically for people on the autism spectrum.

Sometimes, it could be that certain job opportunities were not taken up, said the Minds spokesman. "There are definitely more employment opportunities now in F&B, hotel and cleaning jobs but a minority of caregivers would not consider them, as they are more protective of their children and prefer office administration or retail industry jobs," he said.

Persons with disabilities are mainly employed in the hospitality, food and beverage, wholesale and retail and administrative support sectors, with a median monthly gross wage range of \$1,000 to \$2,800, said the MSF in 2017.

There needs to be more representation in customer service, creative industries, technology, healthcare and education and the civil service, said Disabled People's Association president Richard Kuppusamy.

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said in 2017 that he had asked the civil service to "look seriously" into how it can hire those with disabilities. There were 270 persons with disabilities out of a pool of about 145,000 public sector employees in 2016.

SPD chief executive Abhimanyu Pal said it is hard to tell if it is easier or harder for people with disabilities to get jobs now compared with the past.

He said: "There is no straightforward answer. With technology disruption and industry transformation, some of the low-skilled and manual jobs are being displaced and the key is keeping pace with job restructuring, employment inclusion and skills upgrading."

Janice Tai

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ST S’porean of the Year winner to be announced tomorrow

Selected from a total of 74 nominees, 11 finalists are in the running for the award

Janice Tai
Social Affairs Correspondent

One was going up – using ropes to climb up the mountain to locate alternative cave entrances. The other was going down – deep diving into the cave to help evacuate the trapped boys.

Though there were two Singaporeans involved in the Thai cave rescue efforts last year, both of them have not met each other. Even when the Thai government

arranged an appreciation dinner in Thailand for all volunteers late last year, the two still did not have the chance to say hello to each other.

Veteran diver Douglas Yeo is excited about finally meeting Mr Poh Kok Wee, a rope climbing specialist who runs a company that installs high-rise signs and solar panels in Thailand, at the Istana tomorrow.

“I want to tell him that I am proud of him, knowing that he also volunteered and risked his life in the rescue effort, and we can share some of our experiences and memories

with each other,” said Mr Yeo.

Mr Yeo and Mr Poh are jointly nominated for The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award for 2018, and together with 10 other finalists, they will gather tomorrow at the Istana where the winner will be announced at an award ceremony.

The award comes with a \$20,000 cash prize and trophy that will be presented by President Halimah Yacob. It honours citizens who have put the country on the world map, persevered through incredible adversity or made the community a better place through selfless acts.

Now in its fourth year, the award is organised by The Straits Times and sponsored by UBS Singapore.

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

PRESENTED BY 

In the running for this year’s award are 11 finalists from different walks of life.

They are Thai cave rescuers Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee, teacher Teo Yee Ming, sociologist Teo You Yenn, interfaith champion Siti Noor Mastura, urban farmer Bjorn Low, technopreneur Annabelle

Kwok, blood donor Robert Chew, veteran nurse Harbhajan Singh, Mr Nizar Mohamed Shariff and Free Food for All, a charity that provides free cooked meals for the needy, entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan, and couple Kenneth and Adeline Thong who are “parents” to young adults.

They were picked from a total of 74 individuals or groups of individuals who were nominated.

Fourteen judges went through three rounds of selection to decide on 11 finalists. The public also took part in the online readers’ choice segment.

The judging panel includes editors from The Straits Times, as well as figures such as social entrepre-

neur and activist Saleemah Ismail, chef and restaurateur Willin Low and poet and civil servant Aaron Maniam.

While the award recipient takes home the top prize, the other 10 finalists will each receive \$5,000, among other prizes.

The prize money is sponsored by UBS. Other sponsors include Singapore Airlines, Millennium Hotels and Resorts, Osim and Tridente Automobile.

Free Food for All founder Mr Nizar said he is already experiencing butterflies in his stomach.

“It will be my first trip to the Istana. I am looking forward to see it and hopefully get a photo with Madam President,” said Mr Nizar.

Mr Thong, who is nominated for opening up his house and life to “parent” young adults who do not have a roof over their heads, said he looks forward to seeing the teenagers get to meet the President.

He said: “I also want to talk to Ms Teo about her work on social inequality and hopefully meet others whom we can work together with to restore more caring communities in Singapore.”

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The finalists

 Harbhajan Singh The veteran nurse led a team of more than 100 nurses in the 2003 fight against Sars, the severe acute respiratory syndrome. Today, at the age of 78, Harbhajan Singh continues to work at the very hospital he joined as a young man aged 25.	 Annabelle Kwok At 26, NeuralBay founder Annabelle Kwok has already made her mark in artificial intelligence. She also wears many other hats as mathematician, hardware hacker, sportswoman, arts performer and do-gooder.	 Teo Yee Ming Hai Sing Catholic School teacher Teo Yee Ming has led the school's robotics team from obscurity to success on the world stage. The school team has won the world's most prestigious robotics competition four times.	 Elizabeth Tan Entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan grew her father's shoe shop into a global chain with 50 stores. She is also a humanitarian who set up Sight To Sky, a charity which organises annual mobile eye clinics in India, Pakistan and Nepal.	 Bjorn Low From a small social enterprise, Bjorn Low's Edible Garden City is now a thriving business. It designs and builds food gardens, supplies greens to restaurants, and trains and employs people from vulnerable or marginalised segments.	 Kenneth and Adeline Thong The Thongs not only open their house to young people without a roof over their heads to live in for free, but they also recreate a home environment within the house for them. Both left their jobs to be present in the lives of young people.
 Siti Noor Mastura Siti Noor Mastura rose above childhood poverty and overcame the odds to launch two non-profit groups. One distributes halal groceries to the poor and the other promotes honest discussions between people of different faiths.	 Nizar Mohamed Shariff and Free Food For All In 2014, Nizar Mohamed Shariff set up Free Food for All, a charity that provides free cooked meals for the needy. The charity prepares up to 100,000 meals a year for 3,000 elderly or low-income residents living in rental flats.	 Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee Veteran diver Douglas Yeo, 50, risked his life to help with the evacuation of the last five Thai boys who were trapped in a cave. Age also did not deter Poh Kok Wee, 57, from helping to scout for alternative cave entrances to reach the boys.	 Teo You Yenn Sociology researcher Teo You Yenn published a book of essays on the lives of people who live in HDB rental flats. This <i>Is What Inequality Looks Like</i> is a bestseller that has sparked a national conversation on socio-economic inequality in Singapore.	 Robert Chew Robert Chew, 69, has donated blood 184 times. He started when he was 18 years old and donates blood three to four times a year. His donations in total would be equivalent to draining his body of blood 18 times over his lifetime.	

PHOTOS: ST FILE, POH KOK WEE, ETHOS BOOKS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

S. Korea signs short-term deal to pay more for US troops

SEOUL • Officials signed a short-term agreement yesterday to boost South Korea’s contribution towards the upkeep of United States troops on the peninsula, after a previous deal lapsed amid US President Donald Trump’s call for the South to pay more.

About 28,500 US troops are stationed in South Korea, where the US has maintained a military presence since the 1950-1953 Korean War.

The new deal must still be approved by South Korea’s Parliament, but it would boost the coun-

try’s contribution to 1.03 trillion won (\$81.25 billion) from 960 billion won last year.

Unlike past agreements, which lasted for five years, this one is scheduled to expire in a year, potentially forcing both sides back to the bargaining table within months.

“It has been a very long process, but ultimately a very successful process,” South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said at a meeting before another official from the Foreign Ministry initialled the agreement.

While acknowledging lingering

domestic criticism of the new deal and the need for parliamentary approval, Ms Kang said the response had “been positive so far”.

The US State Department senior adviser for security negotiations and agreements, Mr Timothy Betts, met Ms Kang before signing the agreement on behalf of the US, and told her the money represented a small but important part of South Korea’s support for the alliance.

“The United States government realises that South Korea does a lot for our alliance and for peace and stability in this region,” he said.

The allies had struggled to reach a breakthrough despite 10 rounds of talks since last March, amid Mr Trump’s repeated calls for a sharp increase in South Korea’s contribution.

South Korea’s officials have said they had sought to limit its burden to 1 trillion won and make the accord valid for at least three years.

A senior South Korean ruling party legislator said last month that negotiations were deadlocked after the US made a “sudden, unacceptable” demand that Seoul pay more than 1.4 trillion won per year.

But both sides worked to hammer out an agreement to minimise the impact on South Koreans working on US military bases, and focus on nuclear talks ahead of a second US-North Korea summit, Seoul officials said.

The disagreement had raised the prospect that Mr Trump could decide to withdraw at least some troops from South Korea, as he has done in other countries like Syria.

But South Korean officials yesterday told Yonhap news agency that the US had affirmed it would not be changing its troop presence.

Mr Trump said in his annual State of the Union address to the US Congress last Tuesday that he would meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Feb 27 and 28 in Vietnam, following their unprecedented meeting in Singapore last June.

Citing officials at South Korea’s presidential Blue House, Yonhap also reported that South Korean President Moon Jae-in would discuss the upcoming summit with Mr Trump “soon”, and that US and North Korean officials would be meeting in an unspecified Asian country ahead of the summit.

After the June meeting, Mr Trump had announced a halt to joint military exercises with South Korea, saying they were expensive and paid for mostly by the US.

Major joint exercises have been suspended, but some small-scale drills have continued, earning rebukes from North Korea’s state media in recent months.

About 70 per cent of South Korea’s contribution covers the salaries of some 8,700 South Korean employees who provide administrative, technical and other services to the US military.

Late last year, the US military had warned South Korean workers on its bases they might be put on leave from mid-April if no deal was agreed.

REUTERS

South Korean protesters at a rally against the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) between Washington and Seoul, near the US Embassy in the South Korean capital on Jan 31. The new deal must still be approved by South Korea’s Parliament, but it would boost the country’s contribution to 1.03 trillion won (\$81.25 billion) from 960 billion won last year. PHOTO: EPA-EFE





NAJIB RAZAK
FORMER MALAYSIAN
PRIME MINISTER GOES
ON TRIAL TOMORROW **A10**

WORLD

Five PH leaders accused of having dubious degrees

Scandal engulfs some ministers; embarrassing as coalition prides itself as govt of high integrity

Nadirah H. Rodzi
Malaysia Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

It began with a deputy minister finding himself in hot water after his academic qualifications were questioned. The controversy then grew to engulf other leading politicians, placing the Malaysian government under scrutiny.

Deputy Foreign Minister Marzuki Yahya had claimed to have a bachelor's degree from Britain's Cambridge University via a distance learning programme. But after an activist lodged a police report, he admitted on Wednesday his degree was actually from Cambridge International University, a suspected degree mill in the United States.

Other leaders from the ruling Pakatan Harapan coalition have since been accused of possessing dubious academic qualifications.

These include Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu, Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin, Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sapien and Perak executive councillor Paul Yong Choo Kiong.

The scandal is embarrassing for the PH coalition which has always claimed to be a government of high integrity.

Penang Institute political scientist Wong Chin Huat said: "Those in clear-cut cases like Marzuki should

Degree of doubt: Five politicians in the spotlight



Deputy Foreign Minister Marzuki Yahya
He previously said he had a degree from Britain's Cambridge University. But he later admitted that his degree was actually from Cambridge International University in the United States.



Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin
She was alleged to have obtained a social science degree from the National University of Singapore, according to Bernama news agency, but her name could not be found on its online degree verification portal. She later said she had never claimed to be a graduate of the university and that the information had not been verified with her before publication.



Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu
He was accused of faking a degree in culinary arts from Malaysia's Universiti Teknologi MARA. But he said yesterday he has never claimed to hold any university qualifications and that he had instead been expelled from the university.



Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sapien
A Facebook page had raised questions whether the state chief minister really did obtain a degree from Universiti Putra Malaysia. He has refused to address the issue when asked by reporters.



Perak executive councillor Paul Yong Choo Kiong
The Democratic Action Party state assemblyman had claimed to hold a Master's in Business Administration from Akamai University, which media reports allege is a degree mill based in Hawaii.

FAKE DEGREES NOT OKAY

It's okay to not have a degree; we don't need all politicians to be technocrats. (But) it's not okay to have fake degrees. If those like Marzuki stay on, they will be hurting the reputation of their government, PH and their own party.



PENANG INSTITUTE POLITICAL SCIENTIST WONG CHIN HUAT

should put their party first. And if they can't put their party (first) ... their party leaders must put their party before these individuals and have them removed."

Mr Marzuki, who is facing calls by the opposition Umno party for his resignation, said he will leave it to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to decide his fate.

The revelation of Mr Marzuki's "dubious" academic qualifications led Malaysians to begin independently checking those of other PH leaders.

Madam Zuraida found herself in the spotlight on Saturday after Twitter user Don Juan deRyezal said he was unable to find her name in the National University of Singapore's (NUS) degree verification portal. She later said she had "never claimed or held myself to be a graduate of NUS".

Mr Sabu moved to dismiss rumours that he had faked a degree in culinary arts from Malaysia's Universiti Teknologi MARA, saying he had actually been expelled as a student.

Mr Osman refused to address the issue when asked if his degree from Universiti Putra Malaysia was fake.

Mr Yong, who claimed to hold a Master's in Business Administration from Akamai University, said the issue surrounding him was an attempt by rivals to gain political mileage. However, media reports suggested that Akamai University is an alleged degree mill in Hawaii.

When the PH was in the opposition, it had called out several Barisan Nasional leaders, including former deputy foreign minister A. Kohillan Pillay and deputy foreign minister Richard Riot, for allegedly holding fake degrees or qualifications from dubious institutes.

The scandal surrounding PH leaders could possibly damage the ruling coalition further as there is already widespread unhappiness among the Malays.

A recent survey by pollster Ilham Centre found that 59.5 per cent of 2,614 Malay respondents did not approve of the government's performance in the first five months after last May's general election. Malays make up about 50.1 per cent of Malaysia's population.

nrodzi@sph.com.sg

Najib subtly trolls PH govt over certificates needed 'to be a minister'

PETALING JAYA • Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak has subtly hit out at the Pakatan Harapan (PH) administration over the "certificates" required to become its ministers.

Posting on both Facebook and

Twitter yesterday, the Pekan MP compared the amount of validated certification needed to apply for the Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH) cash aid scheme to "being a minister".

"Nak pohon BSH, rakyat kena bagi 5 sijil sah. Nak jadi Menteri, 1 sijil

palsu dah cukup," he said, as he ended the post with the hashtag #MalaysiaBaru. The message, translated from Malay, reads: "To apply for BSH, the rakyat needs to provide five valid certificates. To be a minister, one fake certificate is enough."

Among the certified documents required by applicants of the BSH scheme are marriage certification, divorce or death certification of their spouse, as well as copies of their MyKad, passport or birth certificate.

Najib made the comments following revelations of several PH politicians who allegedly got their education qualifications from "degree mills".

Deputy Foreign Minister Marzuki Yahya came under fire after it was

revealed that he had obtained a degree from Cambridge International University in the United States, and not the prestigious University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

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1MDB scandal: Najib's trial starts this week

Toppled Malaysian leader, hit with 42 charges linked to \$6b fraud, has vehemently denied any wrongdoing

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysia's toppled leader Najib Razak will go on trial this week over an extraordinary financial scandal that contributed to the downfall of his long-ruling Barisan Nasional coalition and reverberated around the world.

The former prime minister and some of his associates are accused of stealing US\$4.5 billion (\$6.1 billion) from Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) in a mind-boggling fraud that stretched from Switzerland to the Seychelles.

The money was purportedly used to fund a global shopping spree – a US\$250 million super-yacht, high-end real estate, and Monet and Van Gogh artworks were among the items allegedly bought with cash plundered from public coffers.

The scandal ensnared celebrities, with the fraud's suspected mastermind seen partying with Leonardo DiCaprio and Paris Hilton, while the new Malaysian government has accused Wall Street titan Goldman Sachs of stealing billions during its work with 1MDB.

Public revulsion at the graft allegations played a large part in the election defeat of Najib – who set up the fund – and a coalition that had ruled Malaysia uninterrupted since inde-

pendence from Britain in 1957.

Since his shock election loss in May, Najib has been arrested and hit with 42 charges linked to the scandal. He has vehemently denied any wrongdoing.

Far from keeping quiet, the 65-year-old former leader has mounted a publicity blitz, seeking to present himself as a man of the people and constantly hurling jibes at the new government.

This week's trial, starting tomorrow, centres on allegations that RM42 million (\$14 million) was transferred from SRC International, a former 1MDB unit, into Najib's personal bank accounts.

The case involves three counts of money laundering, three of criminal breach of trust and one of abuse of power. Najib has pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

It is just one of several trials he is expected to face over the 1MDB scandal and involves a fraction of the total purportedly stolen from the fund, and the US\$681 million that allegedly ended up in his personal accounts.

But the start of the first trial is nevertheless a key moment and may relieve pressure on the new government, following criticism that it has been slow to act over 1MDB.



Najib Razak leaving the courthouse in Kuala Lumpur last year after being charged. He and some of his associates are accused of stealing \$6.1 billion from Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB in a mind-boggling scandal that played a large part in the election defeat of the former prime minister. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

START OF THE FIRST TRIAL

It's an important moment, albeit a very delayed one. It is very critical for the new government to address and resolve past scandals.



MSCYNTHIA GABRIEL, head of the non-profit The Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism, and a member of a government committee set up to investigate the 1MDB scandal, about the start of the first trial.

"It's an important moment, albeit a very delayed one," said Ms Cynthia Gabriel, who was a member of a government committee set up to investigate the scandal.

"It is very critical for the new government to address and resolve past scandals," added Ms Gabriel, head of the non-profit The Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism.

Najib and his defence team have portrayed the cases against him as revenge by the new government led by 93-year-old Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, the former leader's mentor-turned-nemesis.

Najib's chief lawyer, Mr Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, labelled the upcoming trial "political".

He told Agence France-Presse: "If you give me a straight judge, a straight system of justice and the witnesses are left to themselves without being coached, I'll win this case."

Trial dates have been set until the end of next month and prosecutors are expected to call dozens of witnesses.

In recent weeks, Najib has transformed into an unlikely social media phenomenon, gaining a large number of followers online by attacking the new government's policies and posting pictures of visits to homes where he talked to people about economic problems.

In the most bizarre episode, he posted a video of himself, accompanied by backing singers, crooning a Malay rendition of Kiss And Say Goodbye, a 1970s R&B hit by American group The Manhattan, in which he accused the new government of having an "agenda of revenge and slander".

It is a remarkable turnaround for a man often seen as out of touch with ordinary Malaysians during his nine years as prime minister.

Dr Bridget Welsh, a Malaysia expert at John Cabot University, said "the new image... is fabricated and not connected to his term in office".

She added: "I believe the trials will cause serious damage to Najib's standing." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

No China nod for landing, NZ flight turns back

WELLINGTON • An Air New Zealand flight was forced to return to Auckland while already halfway to Shanghai yesterday, after it was found that the aircraft was not allowed to land in China.

"Flight NZ289 Auckland to Shanghai returned to Auckland around 4½ to five hours into its journey after it was discovered a technicality meant the particular aircraft operating this service did not have Chinese regulatory authority to land in China," the carrier told DPA in a statement yesterday.

It could not immediately confirm what type of plane was involved or how many passengers and crew were affected.

The flight had taken off as scheduled about midnight yesterday.

The pilot later told those on board that "Chinese authorities had not given this plane permission to land, so we needed to turn around", passenger and American academic Eric Hundman told the New Zealand Herald.

"I would be stunned if Air NZ had allowed a plane full of passengers to take off without being quite sure they would be able to land it in Shanghai," the assistant professor at New York University Shanghai added.

Air New Zealand began flying from Auckland to Shanghai in June 2006. Last August, Flight NZ289 was forced to return to Auckland less than an hour after taking off due to a possible technical issue which was later ruled out.

"Customers will be accommodated for the day at hotels or at the airport's Strata Lounge before they depart for Shanghai on a special service at 11pm on Sunday," the airline told DPA.

"We know that customers will be deeply disappointed and frustrated by this situation and we are very sorry for the disruption to their travel plans." DPA

5

The approximate number of hours NZ289 was into its Auckland-to-Shanghai flight when it had to turn back.



China's booming tourism industry is driving rampant demand for professional tour guides around the world. More Chinese tourists are heading to Europe, and more are preferring to travel independently instead of holidaying as part of a group tour. PHOTO: CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Globetrotting Chinese driving global tour guide demand

BEIJING • China's booming tourism market, with its growing appetite for tailored and themed tours, is driving the demand for professional tour guides serving the country's tourists around the world.

One who knows the career well is Mr Lei Lei, a tour guide from Hubei province, who has been working and living in Paris for 13 years.

In 2006, Mr Lei went to France to do a postgraduate course in international trade. But after graduation, the global financial crisis made it extremely hard for him to find work. A friend persuaded him to become a registered tour guide on Ctrip, China's largest online travel agency.

"Starting from picking up and tak-

ing tourists to airports, I began to gradually master the multiple skills of being a tour guide. To provide better services, I got a French driver's licence and a local tour guide certificate," Mr Lei said.

Each month, he can earn about €3,000 (\$\$4,600), much more than he can from other part-time jobs.

What really helped his career take off, however, were two big shifts in the global tourist market.

First, more Chinese tourists began heading to Europe. The number of Chinese tourists to Europe doubled in the second quarter of last year, compared with the previous year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The second is that more Chinese are switching from holidaying as part of a group tour to travelling independently. "More and more tourists are not satisfied with glancing over sightseeing spots quickly with a tour group. They want to know more interesting stories and cultures. So more Chinese tourists favour booking a local tour guide and hearing more about local customs and events," Mr Lei said.

As part of his job, Mr Lei helps tourists book the most exotic hotels and takes them to eateries to enjoy the best food. His professionalism has since brought him more customers, enough for him to establish his own tourism company.

Meanwhile, 23-year-old Liu

Mengxia is another registered tour guide on Ctrip. Having decided she does not like jobs with fixed hours, she gained her tour guide certificate in China in 2015.

After just three years, she has built her own team of tour guides, including operations and customer service staff. During busy seasons, she can receive 10 orders a day.

According to Ctrip, there are more than 5,000 people registered as domestic tour guides in China.

The average service fees of a tour guide is around 300 yuan (\$\$60) to 400 yuan per day, and their average monthly salary is around 8,000 yuan – often higher than average local salaries, Ctrip said.

CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

More US-North Korea talks next week to prepare for summit

SEOUL • The United States and North Korea will hold further talks next week to prepare for a second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un later this month, Seoul said yesterday.

The news comes a day after US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun said more

dialogue was needed ahead of the summit scheduled in Vietnam.

"North Korea and the US have agreed to continue negotiations in a third country in Asia during the week of Feb 17," South Korean presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters.

He did not provide further details.

Mr Biegun travelled to Pyongyang earlier this month for three days of preparatory meetings with North Korean officials, with the US State Department saying the talks focused on Mr Trump and Mr Kim's "commitments of complete denuclearisation, transforming US-DPRK relations and building a lasting peace on the Korean penin-

sula", using the North's official name, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr Trump and Mr Kim are due to meet in Hanoi on Feb 27 and 28, following their landmark first summit in Singapore last June.

That meeting – the first-ever between the leaders of the United States and North Korea – produced

a vaguely worded document in which Mr Kim pledged to work towards "the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula".

But progress has since stalled, with the two sides disagreeing over what that means and analysts say tangible progress on denuclearisation will be needed for the second summit if it is to avoid being

dismissed as "reality TV".

Mr Trump's own intelligence chief, Mr Dan Coats, has expressed scepticism over the North's denuclearisation and told the US Senate Intelligence Committee that Pyongyang was "unlikely to completely give up its nuclear weapons".

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

India's south is greying rapidly

It is ill-prepared for demographic imbalance and migration of workers from north to south

Debarshi Dasgupta
India Correspondent
In New Delhi

When it comes to demography, India is often referenced as a country placed in a sweet spot. Half of its population is under 25 and two-thirds are below 35.

But this rosy picture overlooks an emerging problem. The number of people growing old in the southern part of the country is increasing much more rapidly than the north.

This trend was flagged last month in a report from the Economic Research Department of the State Bank of India (SBI). It showed that more than a fifth of the population in the southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka would be above 65 by 2050. Andhra Pradesh had the highest share of the aged, with 30 per cent.

On the other hand, the national average for this group is pegged to reach only about 15 per cent in the same period. Northern states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam were expected to have a lower share of the aged, with about 11 per cent in 2050. This demographic imbalance, the SBI report warned, would trigger a "huge migration" of workers from the north to the south, resulting in "imminent pressure in terms of infrastructure".

The mismatch is largely due to longer lifespans and lower fertility rates in the south, which is more developed than the north. "South Indian states have always been ahead of the rest of the country in demographic transition, in some cases, by as many as 25 years," said Professor P. Arokiasamy, head of the development studies department at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai. "Some of these states today have total fertility rates that can be compared with European countries."

The faster decline of fertility as well as mortality in the southern states, said Prof Arokiasamy, would lead to a fall in their productive population and... cause a concomitant increase in the burden with rising numbers of the elderly.

This will require states to spend more on healthcare, including on establishing institutions that focus on geriatric and long-term care. Social security will emerge as a bigger issue as states seek to provide support for the large number of people currently employed in the unorganised sector who will retire without any retirement benefits.

The professor told The Straits Times: "To be able to pay for all this – while the productive population declines and the ageing population increases – will definitely have a lot of health and economic consequences. It may potentially even slow down economic growth for these states in the long run."

The north-south migration, mentioned in the SBI report, is already occurring with many young labourers from the north moving to the south, attracted by higher wages and plenty of job opportunities. In Kerala, the presence of many migrant workers from West Bengal and Assam has already generated social friction, with crimes in the state often being blamed on these workers.

While grappling with the challenge of ensuring the smooth social integration of migrant workers, the southern states have yet to develop a long-term strategy to care for their ageing populations.

The lack of preparedness, said Mr Mrinal Srikanth Lankapalli, liaison manager for the state of Andhra Pradesh for HelpAge India, posed a major challenge for India. HelpAge India is a non-profit organisation

that works to support elderly citizens.

Speaking about the problem in his state, Mr Lankapalli said most of the elderly in their productive years worked for the unorganised sector.

"The inadequate pension and medical facilities have left them with limited social security. While the government of Andhra Pradesh has recently increased the old age pension for the poor to 2,000 rupees (S\$38) per month, this is not enough. It should at least be around 4,000 rupees," Mr Lankapalli told The Straits Times.

He listed other challenges, including high annual premiums for medical insurance for those above the age of 60 and poor design of public infrastructure for old people – most places, for instance, are not accessible to wheelchairs.

The Indian government has estimated that the number of people aged above 60 will rise to around 340 million by 2050. The 2011 cen-



Jobseekers at a New Delhi employment fair last month. The north-south migration is already occurring, with many young labourers from the north moving to the south, attracted by higher wages and plenty of job opportunities. PHOTO: REUTERS

sus placed the number at 103.84 million, or 8.6 per cent of the population. A major survey, called the Longitudinal Ageing Study of India, is currently under way with support from the federal government.

Prof Arokiasamy, who is the principal investigator of this survey, said the goal was to use the data generated to frame a comprehensive care policy for the elderly. "We will be looking not only at their disease burden or healthcare utilisation, but also their overall socio-economic well-being," he said.

In December, the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr N. Chandrababu Naidu, sought to address the problem by asking couples in his state to have more than two children – the number advocated in the national family planning programme.

He was quoted as saying: "It is high time to correct the trends indicating demographic imbalances, lest the state may turn senile in the next two decades, marked by more eating mouths and fewer working hands."

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The faster decline of fertility as well as mortality in the southern states... would lead to a fall in their productive population and at the same time cause a concomitant increase in the burden with rising numbers of the elderly. This will require states to spend more on healthcare, including on establishing institutions that focus on geriatric care and even those dedicated to long-term care.

To learn more, visit www.rp.edu.sg/ACE or scan



Weapons that are being used in the final push by US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to oust the ISIS out of the last shred of land in eastern Syria that the "caliphate" controls. The SDF hopes to capture the area by the end of this month. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



US-backed forces battle last ISIS holdout

Up to 600 fighters defending last 4 sq km pocket of Syrian land held by terror group; thousands of civilians trapped

QAMISHLI (Syria) • US-backed forces were locked in fierce fighting as they pressed the battle against the last shred of the ISIS group's "caliphate" in eastern Syria yesterday, according to a war monitor.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by a United States-led coalition, announced a final push to retake the village of Baghuz, the last pocket still under ISIS control in eastern Syria late Saturday, after a pause of more than a week to allow more than 20,000 civilians to be evacuated to safe camps nearby.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported heavy clashes between both sides yesterday morning, as coalition planes and artillery bombarded militants' positions.

"The battle is ongoing. There were heavy clashes this morning, with landmines going off," said Mr Rami Abdel-Rahman, head of the Britain-based war monitor.

The SDF launched an offensive to expel ISIS, or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, from the eastern province of Deir Ezzor in September last year.

The Kurdish-led alliance has since whittled down militant-held territory to a patch of just 4 sq km on the eastern banks of the Euphrates. Up to 600 militants could still be inside, most of them foreigners, said SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali.

Since fighting intensified in December, more than 37,000 people, mostly wives and children of ex-

tremist fighters, have fled into SDF-held desert areas, said the Observatory.

That figure includes some 3,200 suspected militants detained by the SDF, according to the monitor, which relies on sources inside Syria for its information.

At the height of their rule, the militants imposed their brutal interpretation of Islamic law on a territory spanning parts of Syria and Iraq that was roughly the size of Britain.

But separate military offensives in both countries, including by the SDF, have since retaken the bulk of the cross-border "caliphate" they declared in 2014.

Meanwhile, thousands of civilians are trapped in eastern Syria.

"There are fears over the lives of thousands of civilians who are stranded in the pocket," said Mr Abdel-Rahman.

"The battle is continuing and fierce, with the aim of pressing remnants of the (ISIS) elements to surrender," he added. "There is no real progress on the ground because the area is full of mines (planted by ISIS) and has many civilians."

Syria's Kurds have played a major role in fighting ISIS in war-torn Syria, gaining much of the territory once held by the radical group in energy-rich eastern Syria.

US President Donald Trump, who is planning to pull US forces out of Syria, said last Wednesday that he expected an announcement soon that the US-led coalition operating in support of the SDF had reclaimed all the territory previously held by

the extremist group.

The enclave is close to the Iraqi border, though ISIS also still has territory in the part of Syria that is mostly under the control of the Russian- and Iranian-backed Syrian government.

SDF official Bali described the assault as "the last battle". He later wrote on Twitter that the attack had started and the enclave would "be cleared soon".

Senior SDF official Redur Xelil said the force hoped to capture the area by the end of this month, but cautioned that ISIS would continue to pose "great and serious" security threats even after that.

ISIS redrew the map of the Middle East in 2014 when it declared a "caliphate" across large areas of Syria and Iraq. But the group steadily lost ground and its two main prizes – the Syrian city of Raqqa and Iraq's Mosul – fell in 2017.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, DPA, REUTERS

FIERCE FIGHTING

The battle is continuing and fierce, with the aim of pressing remnants of the (ISIS) elements to surrender. There is no real progress on the ground because the area is full of mines (planted by ISIS) and has many civilians.



MR RAMI ABDEL-RAHMAN, head of The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor.

Caught in Syria, foreign extremists face tough justice in Iraq

BAGHDAD • Their home countries do not want them and holding trials in Syria is not an option. Now foreign extremists who are caught could end up facing tough justice over the border in Iraq.

Both countries have suffered for years at the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group and Iraqi courts have already meted out hefty sentences to hundreds of foreigners, often after lightning-quick trials.

As the final shred of the extremist "caliphate" crumbles in eastern Syria, Kurdish-led forces backed by the United States have captured hundreds more diehard foreign fighters. The American military – which spearheads an international coalition fighting ISIS – has in the past shown itself willing to hand those captured in Syria to the authorities in Iraq.

Ms Belkis Wille of Human Rights Watch said the organisation knows of at least five instances in which US forces handed foreign detainees over to Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service. They include Australian and Lebanese citizens transported out of Kurdish-controlled areas, at least one of whom was eventually sentenced to death in Iraq.

Iraqi justice can be harsh and its courts have doled out death or life sentences to hundreds of foreigners accused of being ISIS members, including some 100 women.

Others who come from Syria can expect similar treatment.

"They are at risk of torture and unfair trials in Iraq," Ms Wille warned.

The fate of foreign fighters in Syria has come into sharper focus since US President Donald Trump's announcement in December that the US will withdraw

its troops from the war-torn country.

Washington has stepped up pressure on its reluctant allies to bring home hundreds of militants, but the issue is politically sensitive in countries such as Britain and France.

Governments have been grappling for weeks with the question of foreign fighters detained by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, who have warned that they may not be able to guard their jails once US troops leave.

France, hit by repeated deadly ISIS attacks, has so far opposed the return of militants. But since Mr Trump's announcement, Paris has said it is studying "all options".

On a recent visit to Iraq, French Defence Minister Florence Parly warned of the need to avoid having some extremists "ending up in the wild and dispersing".

Researcher on extremist movements Hisham al-Hashimi said that a deal appears to have been struck with Iraq "at the very highest level and in secret" to tackle the issue.

Such a pact allows foreign fighters' countries of origin to avoid politically fraught repatriations; in exchange, Iraq will receive "ultra-modern arms and crucial military equipment", he said.

But while such a deal might solve a headache for politicians, it has raised serious concerns among relatives. Ms Veronique Roy, a member of a group of about 70 French families with relatives who went to ISIS territory, said it would be tragic if captives were handed over to Baghdad.

French officials say Kurdish forces in Syria are currently detaining some 60 adult French citizens. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Rare tiger kills match on first date

LONDON • The courtship went on for 10 whole days. They were kept apart, but tantalisingly close so that each could see, hear and smell the other.

When the matchmakers believed that the time and place were right – on Friday at London Zoo – the rare Sumatran tiger called Asim and a female named Melati were put in the same enclosure to be potential mates.

He promptly killed her – moments after they were introduced for the first time.

The animals' handlers scrambled in vain to intervene, the zoo said, "using loud noises, flares and alarms to try and distract the pair, but Asim had already

overpowered Melati".

Keepers were eventually able to shepherd Asim into a separate paddock so they could safely get to Melati, the zoo said.

Vets then confirmed she had died. "Everyone at ZSL London Zoo is devastated by the loss of Melati, and we are heartbroken by this turn of events," the zoo said.

Melati was 10 and had been a long-time resident of the zoo.

Asim, aged seven, arrived from Ree Park Safari in Denmark on Jan 29.

Head tiger keeper Kathryn Sanders described Asim as "a handsome, confident cat who is known for being very affectionate with the ladies in his life", adding "we're hop-

ing he'll be the perfect mate for our beautiful Melati".

The match was organised as part of a Europe-wide conservation programme for Sumatran tigers, an endangered subspecies.

The Sumatran tiger is found in the wild only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, and the World Wide Fund for Nature says fewer than 400 exist today, down from about 1,000 in 1978.

The zoo was optimistic about the two animals getting along, initially saying: "It's early days but we've already seen some good signs – there has been lots of 'chuffing', which is a happy sound they make to let each other know they have good intentions. It's fantastic to see that



they're interested in each other already."

But things went horribly awry.

The tigers were placed in the same enclosure after careful moni-

toring, the zoo said, and experts felt it was the right time.

"As with all big cats, introductions, however carefully planned, are always considered to be high

Zookeepers at the London Zoo were hoping to introduce this rare Sumatran tiger, named Asim, to their resident tiger, as part of a Europe-wide conservation programme for the endangered subspecies but he killed the female tiger instead. PHOTO: ZSL LONDON ZOO/FACEBOOK

risk," the zoo said.

The animals were initially cautious, but then the introduction "quickly escalated into a more aggressive interaction".

The tiger section was shut on Friday and keepers were focused on caring for Asim – whose name "means protector in Arabic".

The zoo, in London's Regent's Park, houses more than 20,000 animals. It describes itself as the world's oldest scientific zoo, is estimated to receive more than one million visitors each year and has seen tragedy before.

In 2017, a fire broke out in the Animal Adventure section, killing a nine-year-old aardvark named Misha and leaving some staff members suffering from smoke inhalation. Half a petting zoo and a gift shop and cafe were destroyed, according to the London Fire Brigade. Four missing meerkats were presumed dead. NYTIMES

‘Sensible centre’ independents seek to unseat Aussie govt MPs

Many like ex-Olympian Steggall prompted to step up by anger over ruling coalition’s inaction on climate change

Jonathan Pearlman
For The Straits Times
In Sydney

Ms Zali Steggall is known in Australia as one of the country’s best ever alpine skiers, but the former Olympian has set herself a new challenge: She has launched a campaign to defeat former prime minister Tony Abbott in his seat at the upcoming federal election.

A bronze medallist at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano in Japan, Ms Steggall, now a barrister, is running as an independent candidate in the leafy Sydney electorate of Warringah.

She said she would typically be a supporter of Mr Abbott’s Liberal Party but was angry about his lack of support for action on climate

change. “I know how hard it’s going to be,” she told the local Mosman Daily newspaper on Friday. “He hasn’t been the incumbent for 25 years for nothing... All I can say is if you want change and want something different for Mosman and the area, then you’ve got a choice.” But Ms Steggall is not alone.

Across Australia, a range of high-profile independents are seeking to take on sitting MPs from the ruling Liberal-National coalition, buoyed by anger over the government’s resistance to act on climate change or support clean energy and its right-wing tilt in recent years. The candidates are figures who have typically tended to align themselves with the Liberal Party, but believe it has become too conservative.

In Melbourne, the former head of the government’s Clean Energy Fi-

nance Corporation, Mr Oliver Yates, has decided to run against Treasurer Josh Frydenberg.

Mr Yates, the son of a former Liberal MP, said he was concerned that the party had failed to tackle climate change, restore political integrity and address wealth inequality.

“Unfortunately, the current Liberal Party has lost the plot. Its failure to deal with these issues threatens to sell out the future of all Australians,” he wrote in an op-ed piece published in The Guardian’s Australia edition online.

Mr Yates will contest the affluent seat of Kooyong, which has been held by the Liberal Party or its predecessor since Australia was founded in 1901.

Another independent, Ms Julia Banks, a former Liberal MP, is contesting the Melbourne seat of Flinders, which is held by Health Minister Greg Hunt.

Ms Banks, a former lawyer, was elected as a Liberal MP but quit the party last November, saying she

had been subject to bullying and sexism by fellow MPs, particularly during the bruising toppling of former leader Malcolm Turnbull.

Announcing her candidacy, she said she supported action on climate change, gender equality and a more humanitarian approach to refugees.

Ms Banks insisted she was in the “sensible centre” of politics. “I’ll always support policies which reflect economic responsibility while being socially progressive.”

The Liberal-National coalition, led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, is trailing the Labor opposition and appears likely to lose the upcoming general election, due to be held in May. Despite the nation’s relatively strong economy, the Liberal Party has suffered from a damaging internal split between its liberal and conservative wings. It has struggled to develop a clear position on tackling climate change and has taken a harsh approach towards refugees, angering many of its more

progressive supporters.

The growing list of independents seeking to topple Liberal MPs were emboldened by the shock victory of an independent, Dr Kerryn Phelps, at a by-election in the wealthy Sydney seat of Wentworth last October.

The election followed Mr Turnbull’s resignation and the seat was considered a solid Liberal stronghold. But voters expressed anger over the party’s position on climate change and asylum seekers as well as the toppling of Mr Turnbull as leader.

Dr Phelps said she believed the main motivation for the new crop of progressive independents was their concern about the coalition’s stance on climate change.

“I think the emergence of so many small ‘I’ liberal, sensible-centre independents is a real reflection of where the Australian people really are,” she told The Sydney Morning Herald earlier this month.

“The people who speak to me are exasperated and frustrated by the Liberal lurch to the right and the control of the party by the right-wing reactionaries.”

Most analysts believe the independents will struggle to defeat sitting Liberal MPs. Only Ms Steggall is considered a genuine prospect, but their candidacies could prove a distraction and force the coalition to fight hard to defend seats it would normally regard as safe.

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A New Zealand firefighter battling a fire in Richmond, South Island last Friday. The wildfires cover a 2,300ha area with a 25km perimeter. No deaths have been reported so far. PHOTO: REUTERS

NZ forest fires spreading, forcing residents to flee their homes

SYDNEY • Strong winds yesterday were expected to fan forest fires that have been burning for a week through New Zealand’s South Island, forcing thousands of people from their homes, with more residents expected to flee, officials said.

The Pigeon Valley fire covers 2,300ha with a 25km perimeter, NZ Civil Defence said in a state-

ment on its website.

No deaths have been reported and only one home destroyed so far. “There is some concern about predicted high winds ... which are expected to test the control lines,” the agency said.

Earlier yesterday, 155 firefighters battled the blaze on the ground with air support from 23 helicopters and three fixed-wing

planes, the agency said, making it the largest aerial firefight on record in New Zealand.

Up to 3,000 people have been forced to leave the Wakefield and Pigeon Valley areas, NZ Civil Defence controller Roger Ball told a Saturday news conference.

More people were likely to be evacuated from their homes yesterday. New Zealand Red Cross com-

munications manager Ellie van Baaren said evacuees were tired and frustrated.

“When you have to leave your home and in some cases your livestock and animals and you don’t know what’s become of them, and you’re staying with friends and family, then it’s an uncertain situation for everybody,” she told Reuters by telephone.

Much of the affected area south of Nelson was used for forestry but it also has many small farms. Some livestock has also been moved to safety.

Fires started last Monday and quickly spread. On Wednesday, the authorities declared a state of emergency. Hundreds of firefighters, police as well as civil defence and military personnel are battling the fires. REUTERS

Extreme weather hits Chile: World’s driest desert floods

SANTIAGO • The world’s driest desert is flooding and some of the planet’s wettest woodlands are burning.

Welcome to summer in Chile.

Rainfall high up in the Andes mountains has led to torrents of water pouring into the Atacama desert below, sweeping away houses.

Meanwhile in the south, blistering temperatures have fuelled forest fires, leading the government to declare some regions a disaster area.

President Sebastian Pinera declared a “zone of emergency” in northern Chile last Friday after heavy rain devastated the country’s El Loa province.

Flooding caused six deaths and

destroyed nearly 100 homes, the National Emergency Office said on Saturday. Alerts for heavy precipitation were in effect in Arica, Parinacota and Tarapaca.

The disasters are part of a pattern of increasingly extreme weather in the country that stretches for 4,270km along South America’s south-west coast.

The capital, Santiago, has not received its average annual rainfall in a decade, while temperatures in the city beat the previous record by a whole degree Celsius last month. It was the third time in three years the city has set a record high.

“Chile needs to be thinking about how to adapt to climate change, as it has such an isolated climate that



The arid landscape of Chile’s Atacama desert on Jan 28. Since then, rainfall in the Andes has led to torrents of water pouring into the desert. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

makes it more vulnerable to droughts,” said Professor Park Williams, a hydroclimatologist at Columbia University in New York.

“For the last several decades, temperatures have risen and precipitation has declined in central Chile, making it more suscepti-

ble to wildfires.”

In the south, more than 600 forest fires are raging through 9,500ha of land, an increase in burnt areas from the year before. Compounding the problem are dense plantations of pine and eucalyptus for the forestry industry.

In the north, three people have died due to the downpour and 37,000 in the town of Calama were without tap water for four days. More than a hundred homes are damaged in the nearby tourist resort of San Pedro de Atacama.

The storms have also affected state-owned copper miner Codeco and Freeport McMoran, which operate mines near Calama. Operations at some facilities were slowly resuming on Saturday.

After returning from a trip to see the fire damage in the south, Mr Pinera travelled north to see the floods. Strong to moderate thunderstorms were expected to continue yesterday, according to Chile’s weather service Meteochile. BLOOMBERG

WorldBriefs

Aussie state tightens building laws

SYDNEY • The Australian state of New South Wales said yesterday it would overhaul its building laws, months after residents were evacuated from a recently completed Sydney high-rise apartment block that had “cracking noises”.

Some 300 people were evacuated from the tower in the Sydney Olympic Park on Christmas Eve.

The new regulations will require that designers, engineers and architects are registered, qualified and held responsible for their work, in contrast to the earlier building code which held only builders accountable.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

CNY border crossings spike in China

SHANGHAI • Border crossings into and out of China during the Chinese New Year holiday rose 11 per cent to 12.53 million this year from the same period last year, Xinhua news agency reported yesterday.

More than 6.2 million arrivals were recorded, an increase of 9.5 per cent, while there were over 6.3 million exits, up 12.5 per cent, official data showed. REUTERS

Indian state lawmaker shot dead

NEW DELHI • An Indian state lawmaker was shot dead in West Bengal amid rising tensions between the provincial and federal governments.

Mr Satyajit Biswas, who belonged to the state’s ruling All India Trinamool Congress party, was shot by assailants near his home on Saturday night. The party said his death was part of a plan designed to benefit the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which runs the federal government. The charge was dismissed by the BJP. BLOOMBERG

French protester loses hand in clashes

PARIS • A demonstrator lost his hand during clashes with police outside the main Parliament building in Paris during the “yellow vest” anti-government protests.

A police source told Reuters the man’s hand was severely injured last Saturday when he tried to pick up a so-called “sting-ball grenade” used by police to disperse crowds with tear gas. REUTERS



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The Straits Times says

Questions remain in HIV data leak saga

The response of the Ministry of Health (MOH) to public concerns over the disclosure, that data of HIV-positive individuals in Singapore had been leaked online, has been tepid to say the least. Questions raised many days ago, in this newspaper and other media, remain unanswered. The key question is why the ministry chose to reveal the sensitive leak only now, when it appears to have been made aware of breaches on two earlier occasions. The first was in May 2016, when the ministry received information that an American residing here was in possession of confidential information that appeared to be from the HIV Registry. The second occasion on which the ministry was made aware was in May last year, when it again received information that the individual still had part of the records he possessed in 2016.

The ministry's concern for the sentiments of those on the HIV Registry is understandable. What is questionable is its belief that the individual would not make the stolen information public. He did so eventually, obliging the MOH to go public about the leak. Other queries, about the robustness of official investigations of the individual and his Singapore doctor boyfriend, have gone unanswered as well. Sufferers from Aids are the worst to be affected by the possible consequences of the leak, but they are not the only constituency at risk. Singaporeans at large would ponder the security of personal data stored in government hands. They have not recovered yet from Singapore's worst cyber attack, when hackers infiltrated the computers of SingHealth and stole the personal particulars of 1.5 million patients, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

The release of the public report by the Committee of Inquiry into the SingHealth attack exemplifies the methodical examination of the causal chain of events that lends credence to follow-up measures. Attacks or even failures are unavoidable. But citizens would want to know how far a breakdown was systemic and to what extent human factors contributed to it. Clarity and cogency of carefully unearthed information, made public as quickly as possible, are the best antidote to public disquiet and, worse, scepticism. In the case of the HIV data leak, parsimony with release of information does not bode well for communication between public bodies and the public.

In the absence of timely and convincing answers, the void cannot but be filled with speculation about motives and with rumours of a cover-up. Social media discourse on the latest data leak is full of visceral responses that feed unnecessary distrust of the authorities and their accountability to the citizenry. The health authorities would do well to present a full picture of what occurred in the HIV data leak, keeping in mind a timeline that stretched over several years. Anything less would fall short of the expectations of the public.

GlobalAffairs

Forget the trade war. A nuclear arms race is brewing

A new nuclear arms race is set to take off with the United States pulling out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty



Jonathan Eyal
Global Affairs Correspondent

Governments and diplomats worldwide are devoting most of their efforts to the prevention of a global trade war.

But there is another dark spectre now stalking us: that of a new nuclear arms race. And it is one which, if not managed sensibly, could condemn the world to a spiral of tensions every bit as dangerous as those at the heights of the Cold War half a century ago.

The Trump administration's recent announcement that the United States intends to pull America out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is considered by many as the trigger for the current nuclear tensions; it is – allegedly – a reckless act by a reckless US leader.

But in many respects, America's withdrawal from the treaty is merely a symptom of a wider problem with the current nuclear arms control regime. The real question is not so much why the US has decided to discard the treaty but, rather, why it took the US so long to acknowledge the treaty's demise.

INF weapons are defined as any missiles with ranges between 500km and 5,500km. These could be either ground-launched of the ballistic kind that take a high-flying trajectory before they come down on a target, or cruise missiles that are low-flying and guided to the target by computerised navigation systems.

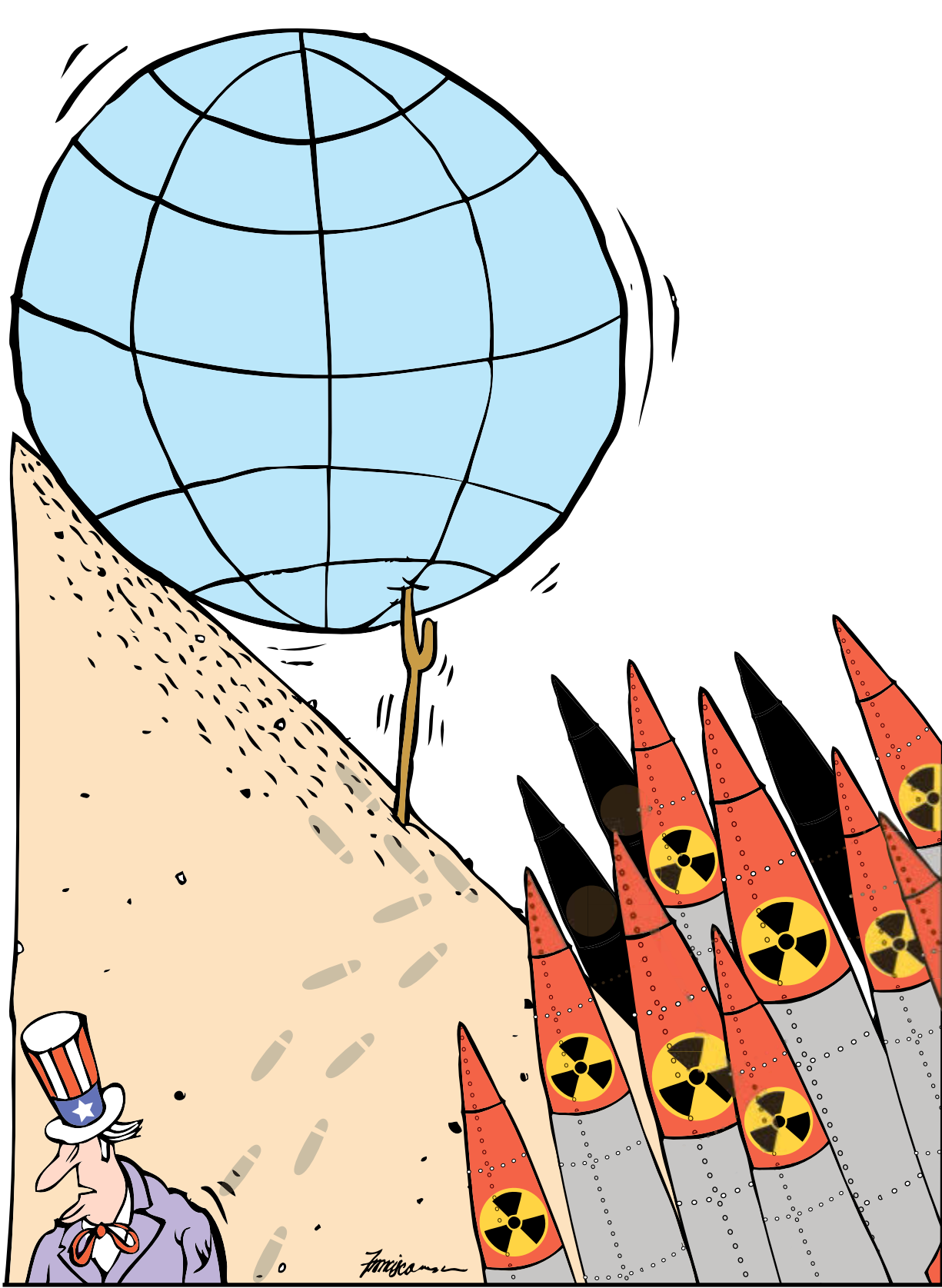
Their development proved highly attractive to the old Soviet Union and the US during the Cold War because they offered significant strategic advantages. They could be fired at enemy positions from a relatively safe distance from the front line, and packed a great deal of punch for the bang. For instance, each one of Russia's SS20 missile systems developed during the 1970s could obliterate any target on the European continent with three nuclear warheads, each one 10 times more powerful than the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Intermediate-range nuclear weapons are highly mobile, so they cannot be easily destroyed in a pre-emptive surprise strike by an enemy. And because their trajectory is much shorter, they are on average three times faster in reaching their targets – and therefore much harder to intercept – than the intercontinental ballistic missiles that Russia and the US could fire at each other's territories across the oceans.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan concluded in late 1987 the treaty that banned this entire class of weapons; around 2,700 INF systems operated by both sides were destroyed in what must rank as one of the greatest victories for arms control efforts in history. So why reverse such a notable achievement?

The official US explanation is that Russia cheated by developing a new missile system, an allegation Moscow denies. But the real reason is that both Russia and the US have long ago concluded that both the treaty and the rationale underlying it have been rendered irrelevant by developments over the past three decades.

In an age when the bulk of the world's nuclear arsenals were controlled by Moscow and Washington, it made sense to



eliminate these systems, particularly since both sides could maintain the strategic balance between them by other means. And at a time when the fate of the world was entirely decided by the US-Soviet confrontation and when the bulk of this confrontation was conducted on the soil of the European continent, it was logical to concentrate all disarmament efforts there.

Today, however, that world is gone. Russia may still give US military planners a headache but, with an economy not bigger than that of, say, Italy and none of the alliances that the Soviet Union used to have around the world, the Russians are no match for the Americans, notwithstanding Russian President Vladimir Putin's current forays into the Middle East or places such as Venezuela.

THE CHINESE CHALLENGE

But China does pose the main challenge to US supremacy, and the Chinese missile arsenal is untouched by the INF Treaty. Yet no fewer than 95 per cent out of an inventory of approximately 2,000 ballistic and cruise missiles operated by China's People's Liberation Army Rocket Force fall within the INF category.

A majority of them are not nuclear-tipped. But they could in the eventuality of a showdown pose a direct threat to US military installations in Japan or South Korea, as well as to US interests elsewhere in Asia. And this is before one factors in China's intercontinental-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons to strike the continental US. China is also investing heavily in advanced missile technologies such as hypersonic missiles, which can travel at about five times the speed of sound.

It was clearly untenable for the US to continue depriving itself of the ability to operate intermediate-range nuclear weapons while China and a whole host of other countries around the world developed theirs. And notwithstanding the anger that Russia expressed at Washington's decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty, the reality remains that planners in Moscow are delighted that restrictions are now over; President Putin has already ordered the early deployment of the new missile which, supposedly, Russia never had.

It would be nice to believe that, instead of abrogating a treaty that

has done so much to eliminate an entire class of nuclear-capable weapons, China and others could be brought into its remit. But that is fanciful; China has absolutely no intention of putting its own arsenal into the bargaining although, without any apparent hint that they understand the irony, Chinese officials have called upon the US to continue abiding by the INF Treaty.

China's refusal to engage in nuclear disarmament talks with the US may not be very appealing, but carries its own logic. The US not only continues to enjoy a vast superiority in conventional weapons systems over China, but also has forward bases near China's shores; one presumes that the US would not have been amused if its own shoreline was surrounded by Chinese military bases and Chinese allies, yet this is precisely the situation China faces today. Nuclear arms limitation pacts that put a ceiling on the size of China's nuclear arsenal only to leave the US enjoying its conventional superiority don't make much sense from Beijing's perspective.

STRATEGIC PARITY

More significantly, the Russian-US arms controls agreements were

based on the concept of achieving a strategic parity between the two powers; both were reassured that they did not have a substantial advantage over the other in any specific weapons system. But how to negotiate a strategic parity between China and the US, when one has to factor in the nuclear systems of India and Pakistan, not to speak of Iran, Israel and North Korea, as well as those of America's close allies in Europe? Nothing is impossible, of course. But the creation of a new nuclear arms control regime that includes Russia, China and the US looks highly unlikely.

Chances are high, therefore, that the US will move to develop a new class of intermediate-range nuclear systems. And that, in turn, will place America's closest allies in a serious strategic predicament.

In the short term, the US can use its warships to deploy INF systems; these were never covered by the old treaty. But doing so is expensive, so the option of deploying new ground-based US intermediate-range missiles will soon have to be explored.

Two Eastern European nations – Poland and Romania, the biggest in the region and the ones that fear Russia most – already have US military installations that can be beefed up with new systems. But the deployment of a new US class of weapons in Europe will be highly controversial, further straining an already strained transatlantic relationship.

Nor are matters going to be any easier in Asia, where the burden of any new US ground deployment is likely to fall on either Japan or South Korea. Since that would raise a political storm, the Americans may decide to use Guam, their own territory, as a site for future missiles. But that is about 3,000km from the Chinese coastline, so the US would have to develop a new missile system for the purpose. And China is hardly likely to sit idly by as all these developments unfold. Either way, a new race for more advanced missiles and nuclear weapons lies ahead of us.

That is not likely to replicate exactly the pattern of the old arms races of the Cold War; neither Russia nor China has any intention of building up the huge arsenals of the past. Still, a military competition is in the offing as countries race to the cutting edge of technology. Hypersonic weaponry is clearly a preferred option. "My view is that this is not an advantage that we can concede to people who wish to be our adversaries," says Mr Michael Griffin, the US' chief defence military technology boss. "And there is no reason why we should."

Nuclear calculations can get even more complicated by 2021, when another nuclear limitations agreement, the so-called New Start pact, is set to expire.

It is now becoming clearer than ever that the period since the end of the Cold War was an aberration, and that we are returning to the world of the past, of arms races and technological competitions, with very few international treaties governing or mitigating such developments.

Sad? Certainly. But worse still would be to pretend not to notice such realities.

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Visiting Raffles’ grave the day I turned 24

Sean Lim

For The Straits Times

It started with author Neil Humphreys’ Facebook post on Jan 28 when the Singapore Bicentennial was launched, and he shared his visit to the burial site of Sir Stamford Raffles in London. Jan 28 was my birthday and I happened to be in London, so why not make the day meaningful by following what Mr Humphreys did? Anyway, Raffles’ grave was situated close by, at St Mary’s Church in Hendon, a 30-minute train ride from the city. Upon arrival, I was disappointed that the church was locked and nobody seemed to be around. I tried walking through the church’s cemetery, fruitlessly trying to find Raffles’ tombstone. On the verge of leaving, I gave it a last shot by ringing the intercom. Fortunately, a church warden answered. He was just about to call it a day, so I was lucky to make it in time. He showed me around and shared that when Raffles died in 1826, he was not allowed to be buried within the building. According to the warden, this was peculiar given someone of Raffles’ stature. Apparently, he had had a disagreement with then vicar Theodore Williams when he was alive. Williams had stakes within the slave trade and objected to Raffles’ anti-slavery stance. Given the conflict of interest, it was unsurprising that Raffles was laid to rest outside the church. It was only about a century ago that his tombstone was fitted inside after the church was extended. After the story-telling, the warden showed me a gold-plated plaque erected by Raffles’ family in 1887, stating his role as a “founder” of Singapore. We then moved towards the chancel, and the warden removed a plastic cover on the floor, revealing Raffles’ grey concrete tombstone. Honestly, his tombstone came as a surprise to me. Raffles is a key figure in our history and I imagined his grave to be grand and monumental. Instead, it was just a modest gravestone. Maybe it was not an English tradition for non-royals to have a glitzy tombstone or memorial, never mind their fame. A similar observation was made at Westminster Abbey days later, as I saw the tombstones of other luminaries such as Charles Darwin and Isaac Newton. Before I left, I mentioned to the warden that this visit was special because it coincided exactly with the bicentennial’s launch and, of course, my birthday as well. He was aware of Singapore’s

commemoration of 200 years since the 1819 landing by Raffles on the island of Singapore. Seems that the reach of our little red dot is quite wide! I added that the commemoration was controversial because some felt it was glorifying colonialism and hence improper. Never mind that the bicentennial was termed as a “commemoration” and not “celebration”. Some even accused the Government of creating a feel-good effect for looming elections. There were others, however, who said it was important to recognise this chapter in our history. The warden gave his own take on Singapore’s colonialism. He said that while colonialism was constructed as repressive and evil, we must acknowledge the benefits gained from the political system introduced by the British. One would be the rule of law, so as a small country we can be treated as an equal on the international stage; another would be parliamentary democracy, giving Singaporeans the power to elect leaders regularly. Moreover, compared with other colonial legacies elsewhere, Raffles was a “lesser evil”, he argued. For me, what remains crucial are the lessons. We will be marking Total Defence Day on Feb 15 – a harsh reminder that only we ourselves are responsible for protecting Singapore, after British neglect led to Singapore’s fall to the Japanese in 1942. The date marks a blemish in our history – so by all means, frown upon it and vow not to let history repeat itself. Similarly, with colonialism, we can commemorate and draw lessons from its advent and eventual end. Second, we can let pragmatism prevail. As much as we condemn the ideology of colonialism, we should not denounce everything linked to our colonial history, which unfortunately was what some post-colonial countries did, to their disadvantage. Successful aspects of the system left behind and inherited by us should continue to be embraced. Nobody is advocating a revival of colonialism, but neither should we destroy what worked for us. Like it or not, colonialism is part of our history. It would be more helpful to be practical and acknowledge the benefits it brought us. I am confident that after five decades, our national identity is strong enough not to falter simply because of a bicentennial commemoration. It takes more than that to break us apart, if we ever do. I believe that even older people, who themselves lived through colonialism, are rational enough not to overly indulge in the negative experiences of colonialism and ignore the benefits we inherited.



The Singapore Bicentennial commemorates Sir Stamford Raffles’ arrival in Singapore in 1819. While some condemn the ideology of colonialism, we should not denounce everything linked to our colonial history, says the writer. ST FILE PHOTO

Like it or not, colonialism is part of our history. It would be more helpful to be practical and acknowledge the benefits it brought us. I am confident that after five decades, our national identity is strong enough not to falter simply because of a bicentennial commemoration. It takes more than that to break us apart, if we ever do.

The bicentennial can be a fruitful period for us as we take stock of our history, even as we argue on the merits and drawbacks of the colonial era. The heat of the debate reflects how passionate Singaporeans are about their identity and the national narrative. It can also be a time of self-reflection. As I was leaving the church, I heard the distinct twang of the Singaporean accent. Two other young Singaporeans were visiting the church to see Raffles’ grave. Both were undergraduates studying in London. “You guys are also here because of the 200 years’ thing, right?” I asked, a little taken aback by this spontaneous meeting of fellow Singaporeans at an unlikely place. They smiled and nodded, and we took a selfie together. There

seemed to be an unspoken Singaporean bond created immediately, built upon a common acknowledgement of our history. I am sure they will have their own interpretation of Raffles and the British colonial legacy this bicentennial. As for me, I will remember the day I turned 24 fondly, as the day I visited Raffles’ grave in his own homeland on the very same date, 200 years ago, that he fortuitously set foot in my own home country. I might have been far from home, but my mind and heart were very much of Singapore. stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Sean Lim is an undergraduate at the National University of Singapore studying political science.

The Brexit delusion of creating ‘Singapore upon Thames’

Martin Wolf

Inside two months, the United Kingdom may crash out of the European Union into a “no deal” limbo. What happens then? For some Brexiters, the answer seems to be to blame this disaster on the EU and then turn the UK into Singapore, or what they imagine Singapore to be. These people are right on one thing: Singapore has been a great economic success. But it is not a laissez-faire paradise. On the contrary, its success has been built on hard work, forced sacrifices and (relatively benign) authoritarianism. We should learn from Singapore, but must not think it a plausible model for the UK’s future. Of the economic successes of the UK’s former colony, there is no doubt. By 1980, Singapore’s real gross domestic product (GDP) per head had converged on the UK’s. By last year, it was more than twice as high. According to the

International Monetary Fund, Singapore’s real GDP per head is fourth in the world (after Qatar, Macau and Luxembourg). As a city-state with a tiny domestic market, Singapore’s future lay in attracting foreign multinationals and skills. With no domestic market to speak of, free trade was an obvious choice. But free trade is not laissez-faire. Singapore promoted new industries. It continues to have large shareholdings via Temasek, its investment company. Singapore has exploited a superb location in the fast-growing Asian region, its increasingly high-quality workforce and low taxes to turn itself into a premier hub for international business. But it has also participated actively in regional integration via the Association of South-east Asian Nations. Crucially, the reliability of Singapore’s “offer” to the world is underpinned by the fact that just one highly competent governing party has ruled it throughout its history as an independent country. Among complementary

explanations for Singapore’s fast growth is that it invests so much: Between 2008 and last year, it invested an average of 29 per cent of GDP, while the UK invested a mere 17 per cent. This also helps explain why Singapore’s infrastructure is exceptional. Singapore had a staggering savings rate of 47 per cent of GDP in those years, against the UK’s miserable 12 per cent. Singapore’s gross savings rates are heavily distorted by inclusion of the profits of multinationals. Yet even savings rates in “indigenous GDP” have been around 30 per cent. One explanation for these high savings is the Central Provident Fund, which compels workers and employers to contribute 37 per cent of wages and salaries up to age 55. People use this money for house purchases, health and pensions: It is Singapore’s alternative to a redistributive welfare state. Another explanation is fiscal surpluses: Between 2008 and last year, these averaged 5 per cent of GDP. Amazingly, Singapore’s net international

Singapore has been a great economic success. But it is not a laissez-faire paradise. On the contrary, its success has been built on hard work, forced sacrifices and (relatively benign) authoritarianism. We should learn from Singapore, but must not think it a plausible model for the UK’s future.

assets reached 340 per cent of gross national income in 2017. How can anybody imagine this to be a credible model for post-Brexit Britain? Far from being able to offer stability to global businesses, the UK is busily blowing up the basis on which many of them came to the UK. Far from guaranteeing favourable access to its most important regional economic arrangement, the UK is leaving it, possibly without any deal at all. And, far from being a city-state of 5.6 million people, the UK is a geographically, socially and politically diverse democratic polity of 66 million. Its future should not – and will not – be determined by people and businesses enticed by turning it into nothing more than a haven of low taxation and light regulation. That cannot stand. It would be wrong to argue that the UK lacks everything Singapore possesses. Its civil service is non-corrupt, for example, and the rule of law remains entrenched. It would be quite wrong, too, to argue that the UK is unable to learn a

great deal from Singapore. Indeed, it would be a good idea for the UK to learn from successes elsewhere. A determined effort to raise abysmally low savings and investment rates, improve infrastructure and transform educational standards, all hallmarks of Singapore’s development, would be highly desirable. Singapore has also raised home ownership to an extraordinary rate of 91 per cent. All these are achievements from which the UK could seek to learn. But they also demand difficult political choices and sacrifices. The idea that eliminating tariffs and regulations and slashing taxes will deliver broadly shared prosperity in post-Brexit Britain is a fantasy. The Singapore example is far more complex and nuanced than that. The two economies and polities are starting from quite different places, with different histories and different possibilities. To believe otherwise is magical thinking. To inflict magical thinking on the lives of real people is an unforgivable political sin. FINANCIAL TIMES

Was Lim Bo Seng truly a Singaporean war hero?

A longer, deeper lens on Singapore’s military history should go beyond the overused stories of World War II heroism

Ong Weichong

For The Straits Times

In much of post-war South-east Asia, the central role played by militaries in the struggle for independence such as in Indonesia earned the armed forces a place in the national narrative.

For centuries, Vietnamese nationalism drew strength from its past of armed resistance against imperial authority. In the absence of a war of armed resistance to colonial authority, it is perhaps understandable that Singapore’s military history draws upon its involvement in British colonial rule as a convenient starting point. There are, however, limits to appropriating Singapore’s colonial military history as Singaporean.

Singapore’s pre-independence military past – particularly events, sites, monuments and personages from World War II – are appropriated as part of Singapore’s nation-building narrative. Military history, however, is more than just the heat of battles and the great military commanders who fought them. How a society remembers and commemorates its wartime past as citizens and communities beyond the exploits of generals and admirals are part of military history as well.

The sheer scale and number of parties involved in the Battle and Fall of Singapore in February 1942

(Australian, British, Chinese, Indian, Malay and Japanese) allow for remembrance and commemoration in different ways. Sites such as the Kranji War Cemetery are used and remembered by different groups in different ways.

While the Australians meet at Kranji on Anzac Day to commemorate the “Anzac Spirit”, the Kranji war graves stand as testament to British stoicism on Remembrance Day.

In contrast, Singaporean schoolchildren and full-time national servicemen visit the site to learn the lesson of what may come if Singapore were to rely on external powers for its national security.

APPROPRIATION OF SINGAPORE’S COLONIAL PAST

Selective appropriations of colonial history into Singapore’s “nation-building” story, however, can be problematic. In the January 2019 issue of the National University of Singapore’s *Alumnus*, retired diplomat Bilahari Kausikan makes an important point that “Singapore identity was formed only after 1965: Before Singapore became independent, it was a colony. Its people were subjects, not citizens. Those who came here were in principle sojourners, not settlers”.

Indeed, the logic of colonial Singapore’s defence within Britain’s imperial grand design meant that it had to be defended by subjects and sojourners of the British empire – not citizens.

In wartime Singapore, Dalforce, or the Singapore Overseas Chinese Volunteer Army, a volunteer militia, was formed from the overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*). These under-equipped volunteers fought valiantly against the Japanese, but they were sojourners who fought for ideals “other” than Singapore’s independence. Should these *huaqiao* resistance figures be appropriated as Singapore’s war heroes when many of them, including Lim Bo Seng of Force 136, saw a Kuomintang (KMT) led by China as their motherland?

The identity politics of wartime Singapore are very different from those in 21st-century Singapore. As a symbol of overseas Chinese unity, Dalforce had both KMT and communist supporters and communists in its ranks. There were cracks, however, behind this “united front” of overseas Chinese. Despite their common cause against the Japanese, overseas Chinese with communist leanings who joined or supported Chin Peng’s Malayan Peoples’ Anti-Japanese Army were treated with suspicion by British commanders in South-east Asia Command, and later fought against the British during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) years as the Malayan National Liberation Army.

To a younger generation of Singaporeans born after independence or “post-65ers” who may not necessarily identify with the values and identity politics of



To Singapore’s “post-65ers”, the appropriation of Lim Bo Seng’s heroism as Singaporean presents a problem, says the writer.

Malaya and Singapore’s sojourner *huaqiao*, the appropriation of Lim’s heroism as Singaporean presents a problem.

The narratives of wartime resistance are an important part of Singapore’s past, but these narratives should be accurately represented rather than too simplistically appropriated as Singaporean.

If Singapore’s colonial and World War II past is a period of sojourn and search for an identity, can we speak of a Singapore military history that speaks to the present and future generations of young Singaporeans?

One way to do this is to go beyond

a fixation on World War II as the convenient starting point for Singapore’s military history, and cast our net wider to include other “long” and “short” strands of Singapore’s military past.

‘LONG’ STRAND

The “long” strand is to set Singapore’s military past within the *longue duree* of Singapore’s history – *longue duree* being an approach to history that looks at long-term structures, rather than epochal events. Through this lens, we can shape the “how” and “why” behind Singapore’s fall and rise in regional and international strategic importance in the last 1,000 years.

Historian John Miksic makes the case that in pre-British Singapore, the strategic importance of Singapore in the Malayu-Jambi (1025-1275), Classical Singapore (1275-1400), Melaka (1400-1511), Johore-Riau (1511-1780) and Dutch-Bugis (1700-1819) phases largely rose and fell with external trends and perceptions.

This approach grapples with the geostrategic importance of Singapore over centuries from pre-British to modern Singapore. In the colonial era, the Singapore naval base was constructed as a symbol of Pax Britannica’s wide-reaching presence and control in the Far East. The end of Britain’s East of Suez role, independence in 1965 and the precipitated withdrawal of British forces in 1971 meant that the “accidental nation” of Singapore had to find its role in the wider world – and protect it.

Since the formation of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in 1965, its role and capabilities have evolved from “Rising to the Defence of Singapore” in the 1960s to a more “Global, More Capable and Ready” one in the 1990s.

The more sizeable overseas deployments of the SAF since the 1990s and growing partnerships with international partners in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond remain an untold story. This “long” strand of Singapore’s military history that puts Singapore’s role in the regional and global context from pre-colonial to the 21st century is one that deserves greater attention.

‘SHORT’ STRAND

If the “long” strand of Singapore’s military history is one set in the country’s place in the wider world through the centuries, the “short” strand is one largely shaped by the recent experiences of the SAF since 1965.

The “short” strand tells the military history of independent Singapore as stories that belong to citizens – as yours and mine. Such authentic “short” strands resonate with our values as Singaporeans and mirror Singaporean society at large.

One example of a “short” strand that is emerging and having a pluralising effect on Singapore’s military history is the shared experience of citizen soldiers in national service.

From the local blockbuster *Ah Boys To Men* series to independent short films discussing gender identity in NS, the NS storyboard is finding a place in the array of stories that we tell. More importantly, the interface between the SAF and Singapore society reveals a military history of Singapore that is distinct from its colonial military history – it tells the story of a transition from sojourners to citizen soldiers of Singapore.

As a nation, we need to look beyond the over-ploughed battlefields of World War II and tap the under-explored “long” and “short” strands of Singapore’s military past.

What Singapore lacks in an anti-colonial revolutionary military past, like Indonesia or Vietnam, does not make for an absence of a Singaporean military history. Despite the absence of combat experience, a distinct brand of military history focused on the peacetime development of the SAF buttressed by the memories, experiences and voices of its citizen soldiers deserves a larger place in the scripting of Singapore’s military history.

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• Ong Weichong is an assistant professor with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University.

Why girls beat boys at school and lose to them at the office

Hard work and discipline help girls outperform boys in class, but that advantage disappears in the workforce. Is school the problem?

Lisa Damour

From elementary school through college, girls are more disciplined about their schoolwork than boys; they study harder and get better grades. Girls consistently outperform boys academically. And yet, men nonetheless hold a staggering 95 per cent of the top positions in the largest public companies.

What if those same habits that propel girls to the top of their class – their hyper-conscientiousness about schoolwork – also hold them back in the workforce?

When investigating what deters professional advancement for women, journalists Katty Kay and Claire Shipman found that a shortage of competence is less likely to be an obstacle than a shortage of confidence.

When it comes to work-related confidence, they found men are far ahead. “Underqualified and underprepared men don’t think twice about leaning in,” they wrote. “Overqualified and overprepared, too many women still hold back. Women feel confident only when they are perfect.”

As a psychologist who works with teenagers, I hear this concern often from the parents of many of my patients. They routinely remark that their sons do just enough to keep the adults off their backs, while their daughters relentlessly grind, determined to leave no room for error. The girls don’t stop until they’ve polished each assignment to a high shine and rewritten their notes with colour-coded precision.

We need to ask: What if school is a confidence factory for our sons, but only a competence factory for our daughters?

This possibility hit me when I was caring for an eighth-grader in my



ILLUSTRATION: WENTING LI/NYTIMES

practice. She got terrific grades but was feeling overwhelmed by school. Her brother, a ninth-grader, had similarly excellent grades, but when I asked if he worked as hard as she did, she scoffed. If she worked on an assignment for an hour and got an A, she felt “safe” only if she spent a full hour on other assignments like it. Her brother, in contrast, flew through his work. When he brought home an A, she said, he felt “like a stud”. If his grades slipped a bit, he would take his effort up just a notch. But she never felt “safe” enough to ever put in less than maximum effort.

That experience – of succeeding in school while exerting minimal or moderate effort – is a potentially crucial one. It may help our sons develop confidence, as they see how much they can accomplish simply by counting on their wits. For them, school serves as a test track, where they build their belief in their abilities and grow increasingly at ease relying on them.

Our daughters, in contrast, may miss the chance to gain confidence in their abilities if they always count on intellectual elbow grease alone.

So how do we get hyper-conscientious girls (and boys, as there certainly are some with the same style) to build both confidence and competence at school?

First, parents and teachers can stop praising inefficient overwork, even if it results in good grades. Gendered approaches to learning set in early, so it’s never too soon to start working against them.

Recently, as I read Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban to my eight-year-old daughter, I stopped at a passage in which Hermione – the fictional poster child for academic fastidiousness – turned in an essay that was “two rolls of parchment more than Professor Binns asked for”. Hermione, I pointed out, doesn’t make great use of her time. She’s a capable student and could probably do just as well without working so

We can also encourage girls towards a different approach to school – one that’s more focused on economy of effort, rather than how many hours they put in. Whenever one of the academically impressive and persistently anxious girls in my practice tells me about staying up until two in the morning studying, I see an opening. That’s the moment to push them to become tactical, to figure out how to continue learning and getting the same grades while doing a little bit less.

hard. “Right,” my daughter said. “Of course she could!”

We can also encourage girls towards a different approach to school – one that’s more focused on economy of effort, rather than how many hours they put in. Whenever one of the academically impressive and persistently anxious girls in my practice tells me about staying up until two in the morning studying, I see an opening. That’s the moment to push them to become tactical, to figure out how to continue learning and getting the same grades while doing a little bit less.

I urge my patients – and my own teenage daughter – to begin study sessions by taking sample tests, to see how much they know before figuring out how much more they need to do to attain mastery over a concept or task. Many girls build up an incredible capacity for work, but they need these moments to discover and take pride in how much they already understand.

Teachers, too, can challenge girls’

over-the-top tendencies. When a girl with a high-A average turns in extra credit work, her instructor might ask if she is truly taken with the subject or if she is looking to store up “insurance points”, as some girls call them. If it’s the former, more power to her. If it’s the latter, the teacher might encourage the student to trust that what she knows and the work she is already doing will almost certainly deliver the grade she wants.

Educators can also point out to this student that she may not need insurance; she probably has a much better grasp of the material than she gives herself credit for.

Finally, we can affirm for girls that it is normal and healthy to feel some anxiety about school. Too often, girls are anxious even about being anxious, so they turn to excessive studying for comfort. We can remind them that being a little bit nervous about schoolwork just means that they care about it, which of course they should.

Even if neither you nor your daughter cares about becoming a chief executive, you may worry that she will eventually be crushed by the weight of her own academic habits. While a degree of stress promotes growth, working at top speed in every class at all times is unhealthy and unsustainable for even the most dedicated high school students. A colleague of mine likes to remind teenagers that in classes where any score above 90 counts as an A, the difference between a 91 and a 99 is a life.

To be sure, the confidence gap is hardly the only thing keeping women out of top jobs.

Women also face gender bias, sexual harassment and powerful structural barriers in the workplace. But confidence at school is one unequal advantage that we can address right now. Instead of standing by as our daughters make 50 flashcards when they were assigned 20, we can step in and ask them why.

Many professional men brim with confidence because they have spent years getting to know their abilities. Women should arrive in the work world having done the same. NYTIMES

• Lisa Damour, a clinical psychologist in Shaker Heights, Ohio, is the author of the forthcoming *Under Pressure: Confronting The Epidemic Of Stress And Anxiety In Girls*.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 25 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 29 to 55 (Moderate)



PHOTO: REUTERS

Dragons take to the ice in Ottawa

Some 1,500 competitors from around the world braved below-freezing temperatures to take part in an ice dragon boat race in Ottawa on Saturday.

Rowers used spike-tipped poles to propel their boats across a frozen lake, to the beating of traditional Chinese drums.

The festival is the third one to be held in the Canadian capital and has been growing in popularity each year. The inaugural event in 2017 drew 60 teams. This year's meet saw 125 teams from countries such as South Korea, Ukraine and China, reported the Ottawa Sun.

Participant Stephanie Bestie, who came from Montreal with her team Ice Capades, told CTV Ottawa the sport is "so inclusive because anyone can learn to paddle". "It's just wonderful to see people from all over the country... and the world," she added.

I toured the home of master potter Iskandar Jalil.

Toh Wen Li
Journalist
The Straits Times



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How police recovered \$27m linked to China Ponzi scheme

White-collar crime unit ploughed through paperwork over 2 years to trace money trail

Tan Tam Mei

Police work is often seen as an exciting, all-action pursuit of villains, but for the Commercial Affairs Department (CAD), it is usually a slog through reams of paperwork. Yet, the results, as a recent case shows, can be spectacular. This one involved almost two laborious years tracing a twisting and turning money trail that weaved through numerous local and foreign bank accounts before connecting to one of China's largest Ponzi schemes. Connecting the dots led the team from the Singapore police's white-

collar crime unit to recover more than \$27 million of ill-gotten proceeds that had been parked here. The case, which the CAD started investigating in 2016, was a landmark one and involved many firsts for the authorities, said officer Muhammad Imran Mohamad Ayub, 32, a team leader with the International Cooperation Branch. When news broke in 2016 that China's largest online peer-to-peer lender Ezubao had been shut down after it was discovered to be a Ponzi scheme, the Singapore authorities received intelligence that some cash had been transferred here. The CAD engaged the Chinese authorities and began investigating.



1.15m
Number of victims ensnared in the scam.

\$7.7b
How much the victims lost.

\$27m
How much the Singapore police's white-collar crime unit recovered.

Commercial Affairs Department officers (from far left) Wong Kean Yong, Tan Ruiyun and Muhammad Imran Mohamad Ayub. The trio helped to recover the ill-gotten proceeds that had been parked here. PHOTO: SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

Ezubao promised high returns to investors, who unwittingly put their money into fake projects. The funds from new investors were then used to pay old debts. The scam ensnared 1.15 million victims, who lost an estimated 38 billion yuan (\$57.7 billion). The more than \$27 million recov-

ered by the CAD had been transferred to Singapore for the planned purchase of a \$23.8 million Sentosa Cove bungalow by Zhang Min, the former president of Yucheng International Holdings, which started Ezubao. The investigations involved going through piles of hard-copy bank

statements and manually plugging numbers into an Excel sheet for analysis. The CAD seized more than \$27 million in May 2016 and eventually established that it was criminal proceeds related to the scam. The money was returned to China last August after investiga-

tions were complete. "We were very happy with the outcome," said Ms Tan Ruiyun, a 28-year-old senior investigation officer who has been with the branch for six years. "It is rare to recover such a substantial amount of criminal proceeds. Most of the time, monies would usually be dissipated by the time a police report is lodged." The case involved two jurisdictions and this meant that close cooperation was needed to get information, added Ms Tan. The case also set a precedent as it was the first time Singapore had prosecuted a conveyance lawyer and a property agent for failing to sound the alarm over the suspicious transaction of the Sentosa Cove property. They admitted in court that they knew the buyer had been detained in China in relation to the Ponzi scheme but did not fulfil their obligations to file a suspicious transaction report, even though they suspected the money used could have stemmed from criminal proceeds. Meanwhile, in China, the 26 individuals involved in the Ponzi scheme, including Zhang, were sentenced to between three years' jail and lifetime imprisonment in 2017. While investigation work might be tedious and time-consuming, it is worth it, said senior investigation officer Wong Kean Yong, 27. "The convictions also demonstrate our commitment to ensure our financial systems are not abused by criminals." Mr Muhammad Imran, who has been with the unit for nine years, said a constant challenge for the CAD is that it is dealing with "thinking criminals". "They are smart. And we have to constantly outsmart and out-think them. They might be one step ahead, but we will always work to match that."

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Mr Derek Teo (far left), leader of special verticals and key account management at Johnson Controls, at the chiller plant in Joo Chiat Complex (left). The firm retrofitted the old building with a state-of-the-art chiller system, and helped save close to 1.2 million kWh and \$250,000 in utility costs. PHOTOS: KHALID BABA, LIANHE WANBAO FILE

BUILDING A GREEN SINGAPORE

More buildings get energy-saving features; aim for 80% to be green by 2030

Derek Wong

In the concrete jungle of the Central Business District, a red flower-like structure stands out against the skyline.

Called a wind scoop, it perches atop the 40-storey CapitaGreen and its “petals” draw in cooler, cleaner air that is funnelled through the building’s air-conditioning system, helping to save energy on cooling.

It is among the energy-saving features introduced in buildings in recent years, with the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) aiming for 80 per cent of buildings in Singapore to be green by 2030.

Cooling systems are a big drain on power, taking up 40 per cent to 50 per cent of a building’s energy consumption. Together with other energy-saving features, such as a double-skin facade to reduce heat gain, the wind scoop helps CapitaGreen generate monthly savings of about 580,000kWh – equivalent to the energy needed to power about 1,500 four-room Housing Board flats in a month.

The premium Grade A office development by CapitaLand sits on the site that used to house Market Street Car Park and was completed in late 2014.

In one-north, near Buona Vista, sits Galaxis, an integrated development by Ascendas-Singbridge designed to generate 30 per cent more energy savings compared with other buildings.

“This translates to estimated energy and water consumption savings of \$900,000 per annum,” said Mr Jeffrey Chua, chief executive of Ascendas-Singbridge Services.

The building, which consists of a 17-storey business park tower, a two-storey retail podium and a five-storey office block, was completed in late 2014.

Mr Chua said the high efficiency of the air-conditioning system contributes to about two-thirds of the savings. For instance, the pipes and equipment are laid out such that the recirculation of air is reduced.

To maximise energy savings, the developer set up the Ascendas-Singbridge Operations Control Centre in 2017. It monitors the performance of 26 buildings, including Galaxis.

The centre uses data and video analytics to reduce operational downtime and enhance security through early detection and response to incidents and faults. It also monitors toilet use to determine the timing and frequency of cleaning.

It is among the first of such centres here. In February last year, statutory board JTC launched its



\$15 million J-Ops Command Centre in Jurong Town Hall Road. The centre oversees the facilities of more than 20 JTC buildings.

However, the latest technology is not always limited to gleaming skyscrapers.

One would not expect to find state-of-the-art technology at Joo Chiat Complex, a shopping mall built in 1982 that is known for its textile shops.

However, in 2015, the building underwent a two-year retrofitting process led by energy service company Johnson Controls.

Mr Derek Teo, leader of special verticals and key account management at the company, said: “The building is old, but the underlying chiller technology is one of the latest.

“The retrofitting opens up doors to innovative solutions, such as connecting (the chiller system) to the ‘cloud’, which can help the old build-

ing to be connected in a smart digital way.”

If the chiller system is connected to a cloud server, anomalies may be detected before breakdowns, potentially reducing mean repair time by 60 per cent, said Johnson Controls.

Since the chiller plant started running in 2017, close to 1.2 million kWh has been saved, which has helped save \$250,000 in utility costs. The amount of energy translates to 503 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions – equivalent to the emissions produced by the electrical consumption of 125 four-room flats in the same time.

Carbon dioxide is among the greenhouse gases that pollute the environment and contribute to global warming.

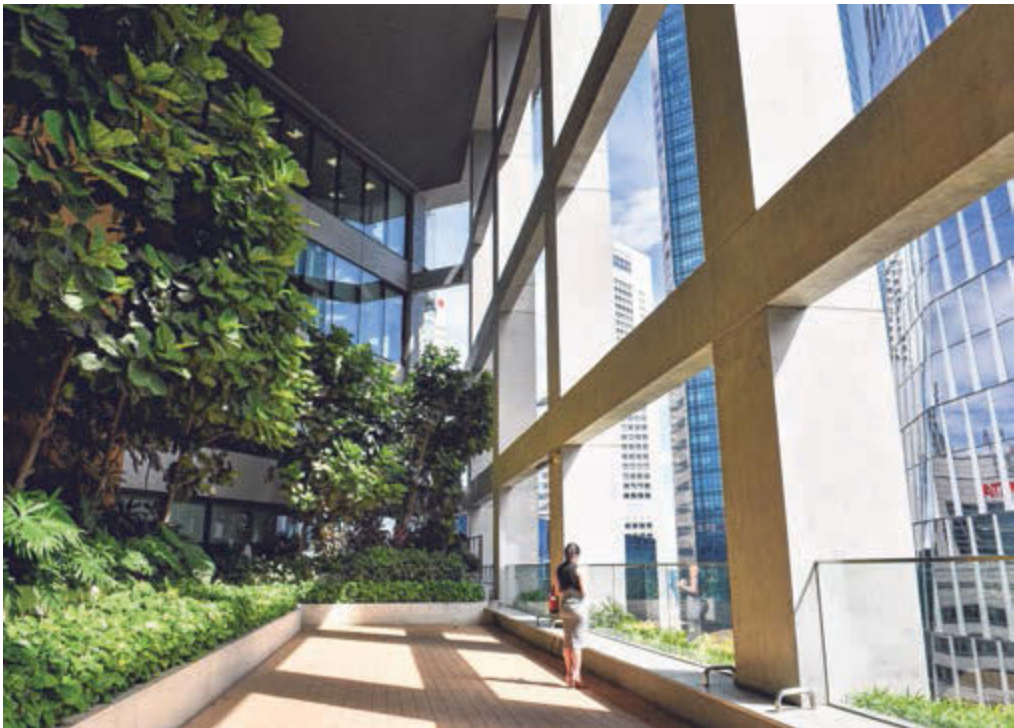
In 2017, Joo Chiat Complex won the Green Mark Platinum award, one of the most prestigious accolades for green buildings given by the BCA.

It is crucial that old buildings like Joo Chiat Complex meet green standards. Currently, only about 40 per cent of existing buildings are green.

Besides developers, there are also firms, such as Barghest Building Performance (BBP), which provide energy-saving solutions.

Using optimisation algorithms to improve the efficiency of installed equipment, its team of 40 engineers aims to shave energy use in 26 sites across eight markets, including Singapore.

BBP chief executive Poyan Rajamand said it has seen millions of dollars in annual savings for customers, which include tech giant HP and Resorts World Sentosa.



CapitaGreen’s energy-saving features include a red flower-like wind scoop (above) at the top of the 40-storey building and a double-skin facade (left) to reduce heat gain. PHOTOS: CAPITALAND, JASMINE CHOONG

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The firm, which was started in 2012, is now working on using wireless sensors to improve monitoring of parameters such as temperature, humidity and water pressure.

Mr Rajamand pointed to the increasing trend of Singapore energy-saving companies going overseas to share their knowledge.

“It’s becoming an export industry,” he said. “Singapore companies have a competitive advantage because the authorities here have been driving energy efficiency for decades.”

wderek@sph.com.sg

Together with other energy-saving features, such as a double-skin facade to reduce heat gain, the wind scoop helps CapitaGreen generate monthly savings of about 580,000kWh – equivalent to the energy needed to power about 1,500 four-room Housing Board flats in a month.

3,500 upgrade from rental flats to owning homes

Most bought smaller units with govt grants in past 6 years

Jev Akshay Jeevan

For five years, delivery driver Mohammad Suhaimi Junaini, his wife and their two daughters aged six and two called a rental flat in Telok Blangah home.

Last September, the 32-year-old and his family moved to a three-room flat in Jurong West.

Mr Suhaimi, who is the family's sole breadwinner and earns \$1,300 a month, had applied for the \$200,000 flat in November 2017 as he felt it was better to buy a flat than pay \$250 in rent every month.

The flat would also "provide the family with security" should anything unforeseen happen to him, he said.

He received \$70,000 in housing grants, and took a \$100,000 Housing Board loan to buy the flat.

His family is one of the 3,500 rental flat tenants who bought a flat in the Build-to-Order or Sale of Balance Flats exercises over the past six years from 2013 to last year, said the HDB yesterday.

Of these 3,500, about 2,000 tenants have moved into their new flats, HDB said. It added that about 600 rental tenants become home owners each year on average.

The HDB also provided a breakdown of the 3,500 rental tenants who became first-time flat buyers.

Three in four bought either a two-room flexi or three-room flat, with 47 per cent buying three-room flats and about 28 per cent choosing



First-timer families who meet the eligibility criteria and buy a flat from the HDB can receive up to a maximum of \$80,000 of housing grants, comprising the Additional CPF Housing Grant of up to \$40,000 and the Special CPF Housing Grant of up to \$40,000.

Mr Mohammad Suhaimi Junaini, his wife Mariamah Tukiran, daughters Dhiya Marissa and Zia Syadza (on sofa) moved into their new three-room flat in September. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

two-room flexi flats. The rest bought flats of other sizes.

About 72 per cent of the group bought a flat with the help of the Additional CPF Housing Grant (AHG) or the Special CPF Housing Grant, or both.

First-timer families who meet the eligibility criteria and buy a flat from the HDB can receive up to a maximum of \$80,000 of housing grants, comprising the AHG of up to \$40,000 and the Special CPF Housing Grant of up to \$40,000.

The HDB added that about 20 per cent booked a flat under the Ten-

ants' Priority Scheme. Under the scheme, the HDB sets aside 10 per cent of flat supply in sales exercises for eligible public rental tenants, as well as for other applicants whose flats are affected by the Government's resettlement or redevelopment programmes.

Meanwhile, rental tenants who opt for a resale flat can receive up to \$110,000 in housing grants. This comprises the CPF Housing Grant of up to \$50,000, AHG of up to \$40,000 and the Proximity Housing Grant of up to \$20,000.

National University of Singapore

sociologist Tan Ern Ser said the Government has been giving housing grants to enable rental tenants to eventually own their own flats.

These grants, when coupled with measures aimed at training and helping the adults to secure jobs, and with support for childcare and the children, "could contribute to preventing their being entrenched in rental housing, while enhancing the social mobility chances of both the adults and... their children", he said.

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Couples 'freeze' for World Marriage Day event

Rahimah Rashith

For five minutes amid the hustle and bustle of Orchard Road yesterday, Mr William Wee, 80, held his wife Nancy, 79, and the couple "froze" in that pose for five minutes.

With one arm over her shoulders, Mr Wee looked at his wife lovingly. "The most important thing for me in a marriage is to love and bring joy to one another," said the retired navy officer.

The couple, who have been married for 58 years, were among 280 people who "froze" in different poses at 5pm outside ION Orchard shopping mall to celebrate World Marriage Day, which is observed on the second Sunday of February every year, just before Valentine's Day this year.

The flash-mob event was organised by the Worldwide Marriage Encounter (Singapore).

"We wanted to encourage strong marriages with this initiative," said Ms Christina Bong, coordinator of the non-profit body.

"We realise that marriage is not an easy journey, with increasing divorce rates and challenges that couples today face."

She added: "Strong marriages are the foundation of strong families."

Marriage Encounter was formed by a Catholic priest, who created a series of conferences for married couples in Spain in 1952.



Married couples, some with their children, participating in a "freeze flash mob" - posing still for five minutes - to celebrate World Marriage Day outside ION Orchard yesterday. A total of 280 people took part in the event. To mark their wedded bliss, they held signs stating how long they had been married. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

Since 2011, the Singapore chapter of the pro-family initiative has been celebrating World Marriage Day with a flash-mob event. It also runs programmes for married couples.

Many other countries, including

Australia, Belgium, Ecuador, Guatemala, Italy and Spain, have also held similar flash-mob events to celebrate World Marriage Day.

Passers-by on Singapore's main shopping belt, who were puzzled

by the scene, only had to notice the placards that read: "Please do not be alarmed. Just happily married couples having fun."

All of the couples involved in the event held signs showing the num-

ber of years they had been happily married. One participant, Mrs Priska Marina, 27, who got hitched four months ago, said marriage had opened her eyes to a world of understanding.

"So far, our wedded life has been wonderful. We learnt to be transparent with each other and do things together," said the branding executive.

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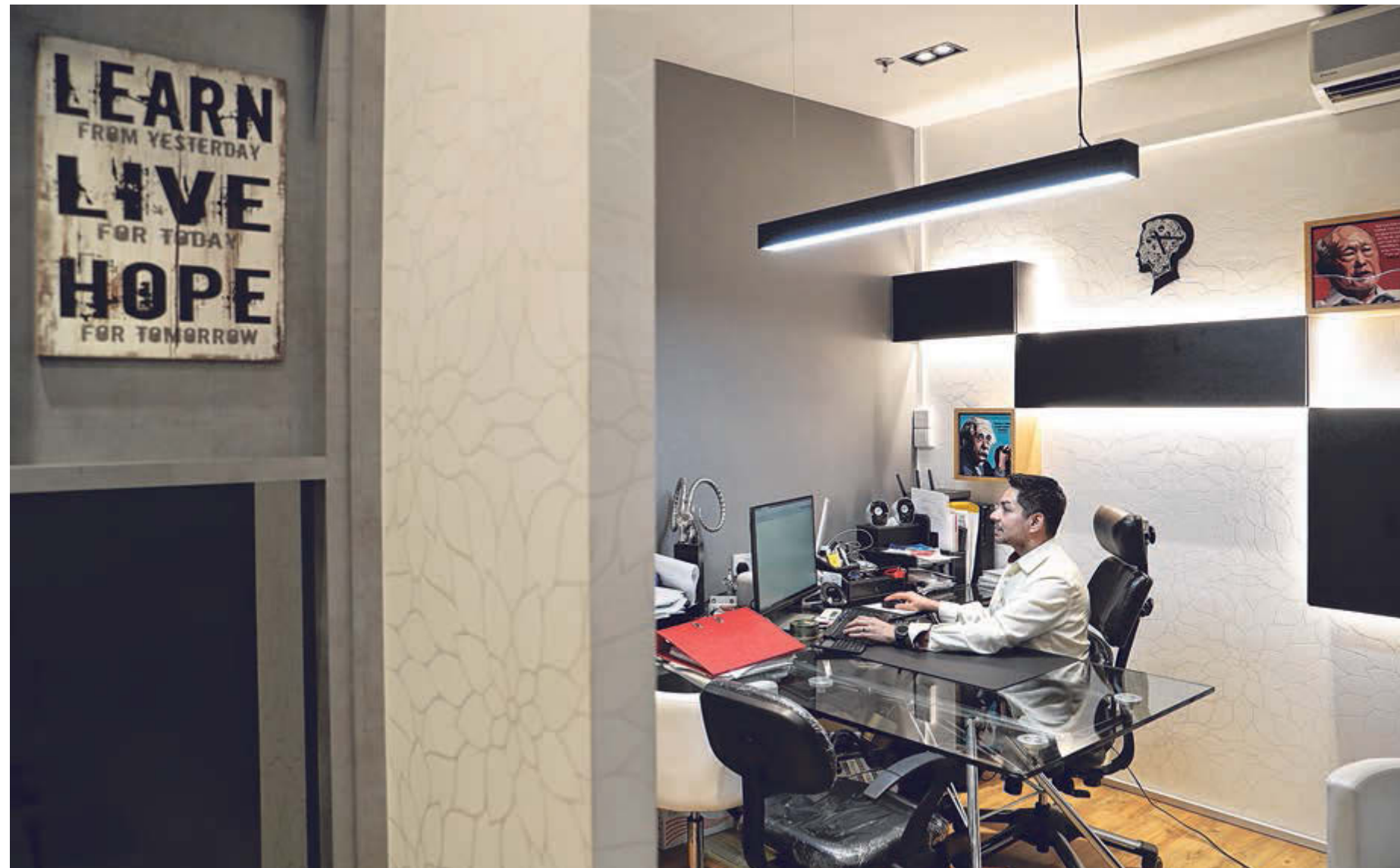
CHERISHING LOVE

I never regretted her as my life, as my wife. Cherish love. I hope people will love their family, spouses and loved ones while they still can. Do not take for granted what you have until it's lost.



MR CHANDRU VISHINDAS

Mr Vishindas during a church worship service at Suntec City convention centre, as his mother-in-law Rani Sham Baharani watches over Madam Pooja.



An inspirational poster hangs on the wall as Mr Vishindas works in his office in Balestier. Last July, he set up Bargain King, a wholesale and distribution company dealing with gifts, souvenirs and garments. He has also been working as a property agent since 2015 to supplement his income.



Mr Chandru Vishindas (in red) sharing a light-hearted moment with his daughter Rheanna during his birthday celebration at Suntec City convention centre in August 2017. With him were his wife, Madam Pooja Baharani (in wheelchair), his son Ryan and members of his church cell group. He credits his faith and the support from his church as a huge source of encouragement and strength. ST PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN



Mr Vishindas taking centre stage at a belated birthday celebration with bikers from the Street Coyotes Motorcycle Club at 301 Bar & Kitchen in Canberra Road, in Sembawang, in August 2017. He has been riding with the club since 2010.

LOVE, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH

For the past 6 years, businessman has stayed by the side of semi-comatose wife, juggling work, family



Neo Xiaobin
Executive Photojournalist

Numerous challenges have come thick and fast for one Singapore couple, but the strength of their bond has proven remarkably resilient – a tale as heart-warming as any as St Valentine's Day approaches.

Businessman Chandru Vishindas and Madam Pooja Baharani Ghan-sham were teenage sweethearts and each other's first love when

they met at age 15. A year later, Mr Vishindas proposed and the couple, both now 39, eventually married in 2004. Three years later, their daughter Rheanna was born and life was good. But everything changed forever on June 20, 2012.

Madam Pooja, who was expecting her second child, went into labour and was admitted to hospi-

tal. The couple's joyful anticipation turned into devastation when she encountered severe foetal distress while delivering their son in an instrument-assisted delivery.

Madam Pooja also suffered massive bleeding after the delivery and was in hospital for five months.

The complications also left her in a semi-vegetative state, while her newborn son Ryan suffered brain injuries which have left him with mixed spastic and dystonic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. He requires continuous medical assistance.

Six years on, Madam Pooja, known as "Pinky" to friends and family, has had 10 major operations and remains semi-comatose, looked after at home by two full-time nurses and her mother Rani Sham Baharani, 64.

Mr Vishindas has also engaged full-time nanny Paramjit Kaur to look after Ryan with the help of an assistant, and hired a domestic helper to help out with chores at home.

It has been an emotional roller-coaster ride for him and a continuous struggle to find strength in ad-

versity. "Every day is a battle to flush down all the negativities and push towards positive living," Mr Vishindas said.

He has stayed by the side of his wife, still praying that she will wake up, though the odds are not in her favour. While Madam Pooja's condition is stable, her body is deteriorating, and last year, doctors told Mr Vishindas to be prepared that she may not return to normal living.

Mr Vishindas has spent more than \$1.2 million providing for his wife and son. Their monthly average expenses are around \$21,000.

Sound financial planning, including insurance coverage, meant he has managed to stay afloat, but finances remain a constant worry.

Mr Vishindas left his job as a vice-president of retail and operations early last year. In July, he set up Bargain King, a wholesale and distribution firm. He has also been working as a property agent since 2015.

The family, including the nurses, maid and nannies, live in a five-room Housing Board flat in Bedok.

In 2013, Mr Vishindas created the website "prayforpinky", dedicated to his wife, where messages of support and encouragement from netizens motivate him alongside support from his church, family and friends. The site is filled with pictures of the couple in happier times, which he hopes will remind people of the importance of love and fragility of life.

"I never regretted her as my life, as my wife. Cherish love. I hope people will love their family, spouses and loved ones while they still can. Do not take for granted what you have until it's lost."

Wedding vows may be a formality to some, but he intends to honour his promise to his wife: "To have and to hold... for better, for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, to cherish and to obey, as long as we both shall live".

xiaobinn@sph.com.sg

• Visit www.prayforpinky.com for more information.



Mr Vishindas saying grace before a nasi padang lunch with Rheanna, now 11, at Tampines Hub. Family remains his priority even as he works hard to provide medical care for his wife and son.



Madam Rani (far right) taking her daughter, Madam Pooja, out in a wheelchair around the neighbourhood with the help of two nurses on alternate days to get fresh air and sunlight.



Madam Rani (left) moving Madam Pooja from her bed at her Bedok home to the wheelchair with the help of the nurses. Madam Pooja has had 10 major operations since giving birth to her second child and remains in a semi-comatose state.



Ryan undergoing physiotherapy with staff at the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore in Pasir Ris, as his nanny Paramjit Kaur looks on. He also attends yoga sessions every Sunday.



Mr Vishindas and Madam Kaur supporting Ryan, now six, on the monkey bars at the playground. Ryan suffered brain injuries at birth which have left him with mixed spastic and dystonic quadriplegic cerebral palsy.

No injuries reported, but up to \$400,000 in losses estimated; cause under investigation

In a Facebook post at about 10.30pm last Saturday, Poh Ann Keng thanked those who had ex-

A Poh Ann Keng spokesman told



A fire at the Poh Ann Keng temple in Tampines badly damaged the front hall, prayer altar and several statuettes last Saturday morning, the fifth day of Chinese New Year. PHOTOS: FACEBOOK/POH ANN KENG

It moved to Braddell Road in 1996, back to Geylang in 1999, and finally opened its new premises in Tampines in 2004 where it has remained since.

teezhuo@sph.com.sg

part. The quality of the decision-making process is more important." It has already made progress in

vijayan@sph.com.sg

Several academics from NUS and the Nanyang Technological

IMPACT ON QUALITY OF EDUCATION

As the Students' Union, we think it is important to put students' voices front and centre in this debate, which concerns the quality of education that students receive in NUS.



REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STUDENTS' UNION

NUS and NTU will also hold a conference in August to bring back 200 Singaporean scholars doing research in universities and industry overseas. The hope is that they will reconnect with the academic community in Singapore and learn about the opportunities here.

jolenezl@sph.com.sg

[illegible]

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Bling options from Aspial; The Dining Room at Sheraton Towers Singapore. PHOTOS: ASPIAL, SHERATON TOWERS SINGAPORE, COLLINS DEBDEN

Baby, just say yes

Looking to go on bended knee on Feb 14? Here are the ingredients for a memorable wedding proposal

BY MICHELLE BONG

The ring

The latest trends point not only to bespoke creations that call for customisation, but coloured gemstones as well. The platinum-meets-white diamond combo may still be a preference for some, but brides-to-be are increasingly opting for alternative hot rocks, from sapphires to rubies.

Also on-trend: milgrain designs (for that sophisticated, heirloom feel), yellow gold and rose gold. For shopping ideas, look to local stalwarts Aspial-Lee Hwa Jewellery, SK Jewellery and Goldheart Jewellery, or established labels such as Carrie K and By Invite Only.

The setting

Wine and dine your belle on a leisurely, indulgent evening, then whisk her off to a pampering getaway at an elegantly appointed suite. Enjoy dinner à deux at the quietest corner of Sheraton Towers Singapore's The Dining Room; its dinner buffet (\$98++ per adult/ \$168++ per couple) promises a spread featuring fresh oysters, seafood on ice, and dishes including Roasted Grain-fed Tomahawk with Black Garlic at the carving theatre, local delights such as Butter Chicken Masala and sweet temptations ranging from petite cakes to a Pink Rose Chocolate Fountain to Cotton Candy Burritos.

The hotel's Suite Romance Getaway package ticks all the boxes as a memorable retreat, offering 10 per cent off the

best available rate, exclusive access to the premier Towers Executive Lounge for smooth jazz and aperitif (pre-dinner) cocktails, a breakfast buffet for two at The Dining Room and complimentary treats including a bottle of French wine and a box of chocolates.

E-mail thediningroom@sheratonsingapore.com or call 6839-5621 for enquiries or reservations. For enquiries and reservations on the Suite Romance Getaway package, call 6839-5755 or e-mail reservations@sheratonsingapore.com. Terms and conditions apply.

The memento

Charm her with a visual presentation of selfies, photographs, mementoes from dates and even a collection of your favourite love quotes — presented in an elegant Collins Debden diary or notebook.

The stationery maker offers pretty options of smooth premium paper deftly bound into stylish covers. Each volume is a blank canvas on which to tell your love story, before being filled with yet-to-be-experienced adventures.

In a variety of colours and sizes, and priced from \$17.90, the diaries and notebooks are available at selected Kinokuniya, NBC, Times, Evergreen and Popular outlets.



Return to the classics

Enjoy a night filled with classic Lunar New Year tunes alongside stories of the festival's traditions at "Once Upon a Time 2019" by local musical artists, The TENG Ensemble. This is the third edition of the hour-long bi-annual event, featuring special appearances by Sing My Song finalist Ling Kai, and the Guzheng Association (Singapore). It is presented by corporate sponsor and real estate developer Mapletree Investments, at the Level 3 Amphitheatre at VivoCity on Feb 16, at 7.30pm. Tickets are available from \$3 at mapletree16feb.peatix.com.



Refreshing and invigorating

Said to help reduce body heat and fight fatigue, each sachet of Huiji Canadian Ginseng Tea contains carefully selected 100 per cent premium ginseng sourced directly from Canada. Unlike other types of ginseng which have yang (heaty) properties, Canadian ginseng has cooling properties. To enjoy this beverage for the whole family, simply add hot water and allow the teabag to steep. It takes three to five minutes for a complete infusion. Available at leading stores now.



Auspicious goodies

Fight indoor air pollution with BetterAir, the world's first surface and air probiotics purifier that is now available at all Courts stores and online. It releases an ultra-fine mist of probiotics (good bacteria from yoghurt drinks or Kombucha) into the air of your home, car or any enclosed space, purifying it while reducing mould, dust mites, pet dander and other allergens that commonly trigger asthma and allergic reactions. It is also available as a portable travel spray — perfect for flights and your daily commute.

TOP PICKS

Dinner on the go

Bite into Burger King's limited-time-only Mentaiko Salmon burger, comprising tender Hokkaido salmon, savoury mentaiko (spicy cod roe) sauce, American cheese, sliced onion, tomato and lettuce — guaranteed to make your mouth water. Head to the nearest Burger King outlet to sink your teeth into the fast food chain's special offering while it is on the menu. Also launched for the Chinese New Year season is the Mentaiko Double Chick'n Crisp burger (similarly priced at \$5.50 a la carte) and a Four-Tune Box (\$8.80) of sides such as Golden Fries, BK Nuggets, Cheesy Tots and Onion Rings. Available while stocks last.



Tea-time treats

Mr Bean cookies are worth getting crumbs on the couch for. Nibble on tasty flavours such as Almond Suji, Spicy Hae Bee Hiam or Macadamia Nut. Buy four tins at \$73.80 (U.P. \$83.20) or six tins at \$102.80 (U.P. \$124.80), while stocks last. Available at Mr Bean outlets now.



Crunch time

You have seen the TV ads, now experience the flavours of KFC's Parmesan Truffle Chicken. Juicy fresh chicken fried to golden perfection is drizzled with a delicious truffle-infused cheese sauce and topped with shredded Parmesan for an unmistakable burst of flavour.

Available now at all KFC outlets a la carte, or as part of a two-piece meal (\$8.95) and Truffle Box meal (\$10.95).

Same great taste without the sugar

Discover two new offerings from F&N Fruit Tree Fresh: Pink Guava and Mango 50% Less Sugar and Calories* range. Sweetener-free and carrying the Health Promotion Board's Healthier Choice symbol, one serving of either drink meets your daily recommended dietary allowance for Vitamin C. Available at leading stores now. *Compared to the regular F&N Fruit Tree Fresh Apple and Aloe Juice Drink.



Time to chill

Creamy mint ice cream coated in a silky, bittersweet chocolate shell and studded with crispy wafer bits and chopped roasted almonds, King's Grand Mint lollies could be your latest after-meal addiction. Now available as single serves (\$1.20) or in a multi-pack of four sticks (\$4.80) at leading supermarkets and hypermarkets.



COMING UP



Sensational Northern Kansai
The Straits Times,
Bon Voyage, Feb 12



Tech-ready for fintech
The Straits Times,
Feb 13



Careers in Early Childhood Education
The Straits Times,
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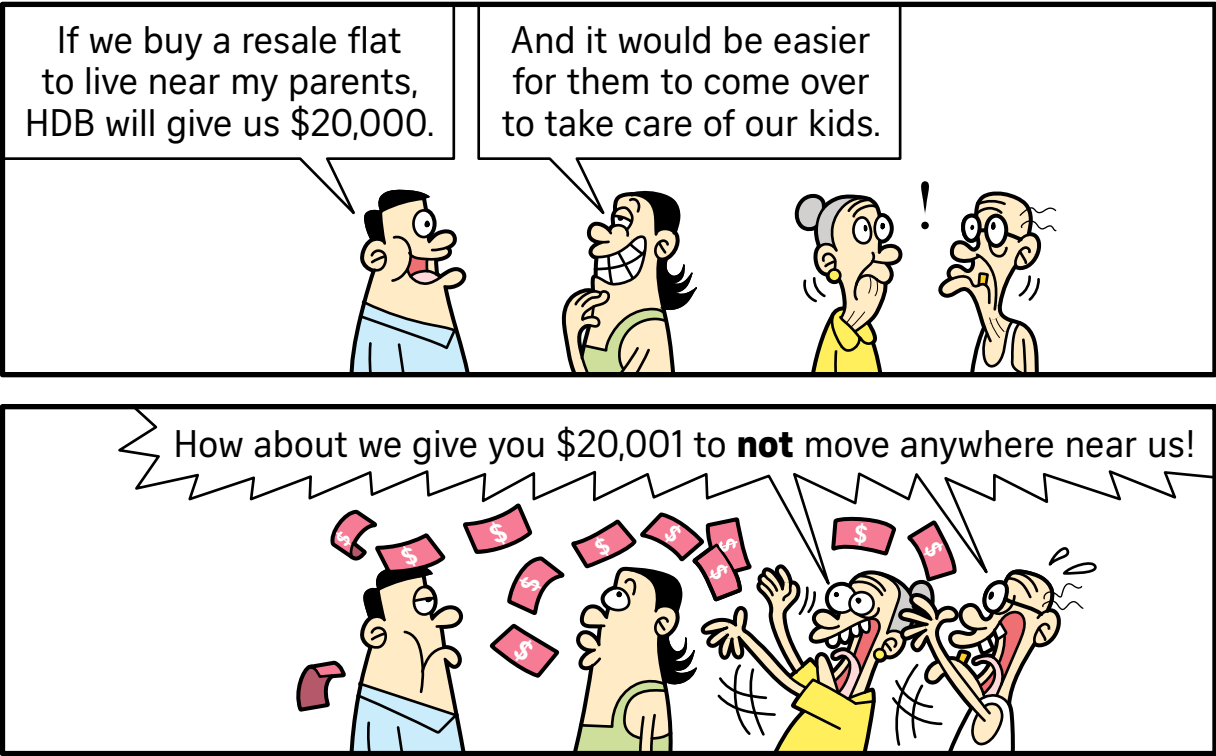
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FORUM

Lee Chan's TAKE

More than 20,000 households have benefited from the Proximity Housing Grant



Giving red packets: Each case assessed on its merits

We thank Dr Ho Ting Fei for her letter (Red packets often given as a show of thanks, Feb 7).

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) is unable to comment on the case that the writer referred to in his letter as investigations are ongoing.

However, we wish to highlight that each case is assessed on its merits to determine if it is a case of corruption. A gift given innocently and without any corrupt intention is not considered corruption. However, if a gift is given or received with a view to secure or to reciprocate with, for example, an unfair advantage, it may constitute corruption.

We assure the public that the CPIB evaluates all complaints and information it receives seriously – regardless of the value of gratification involved – in order to determine whether corruption offences are made out under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Ms Clare Tan
Senior Assistant Director (Corporate Relations)
Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg.

Give children respect, privacy

The recent incident in which a teacher unbuttoned a student's blouse to check the colour of her bra has sparked appropriate outrage due to the humiliation suffered by the students (Nanyang Girls' High apologises after attire check made students 'feel uncomfortable', Jan 29).

This brings to light the arbitrary nature of school attire rules. Nanyang Girls' High School (NYGH) allows students to wear only white or beige bras to look "neat and presentable". My alma mater Raffles Girls' School allowed only white, black or beige bras. The reason typically given is to reduce visibility or distraction.

Yet, the fact that the NYGH teacher had to check the bra straps calls into question how visible they really are.

And if they are visible, shouldn't schools value the comfort of female students and use uniforms that are not see-through to begin with?

I also see this incident as symptomatic of the larger problem of children not being afforded bodily autonomy and respect.

Unbuttoning collars and pulling out bra straps without consent sends the wrong message – that children should accept, even expect, physically intrusive actions by the "rule-abiding" authorities.

If we don't trust our children to conduct themselves within their own private spaces, how can we build a culture where children identify harassment and abuse when they occur?

And how can our children feel comfortable opening up about important personal matters with parents, teachers or other adults?

This case is a chance to reconsider how our treatment of children can have significant impact on their psychological and physical health.

Cindy Guo (Ms)

Help young doctors by clearing up ambiguity

Several recent letters highlighted the implications of the Singapore Medical Council's (SMC) Disciplinary Tribunal case against Dr Lim Lian Arn.

Dr Lim was fined \$100,000 for not informing his patient of the possible side effects of an injection he had given her (Orthopaedic surgeon deserves more lenient punishment, Jan 29; Build trust in relationship between doctors and patients, Feb 1; SMC must consider wider implications of its rulings, Feb 5).

The judgment highlights the difficulty that junior doctors in Singapore face daily at work.

On graduation, junior doctors practise under supervision for about five years in public institutions. During this time, they perform many common procedures daily, including intravenous drug administrations, arterial punctures, and suturing small wounds.

We agree with the general principles of good practice: patients being adequately informed about their medical condition, options for investigations and treatment, consent for all aspects of medical care, surgery risks, among others.

The SMC's recent judgment poses two areas of difficulty.

First, given the number of simple procedures junior ward doctors carry out daily, it becomes impossible for them to fit in the time needed to discuss in full all aspects of all procedures for all patients, and thereafter to formally take and record consent.

Second, junior doctors face this daily conundrum – the differing views among patients, doctors, the institutions they practise at, and even the medical council – on which procedures are minor, which risks are low, and under which situation is consent adequate. The junior doctor will benefit from guidance as to the type of consent needed and extent of the consent to be covered during counselling for each procedure.

Failure to do so will result in a generation of young doctors turning to defensive medicine, which is medically inappropriate and financially more costly for patients and the nation.

We are currently told that the consent required depends on institutional requirements and it is a matter of clinical judgment.

Differing interpretations of what constitutes "acceptable standards" are bound to arise. Clear instructions from the relevant authorities, ideally at a national level, will resolve the current ambiguity, and allow junior doctors to provide appropriate and sustainable healthcare.

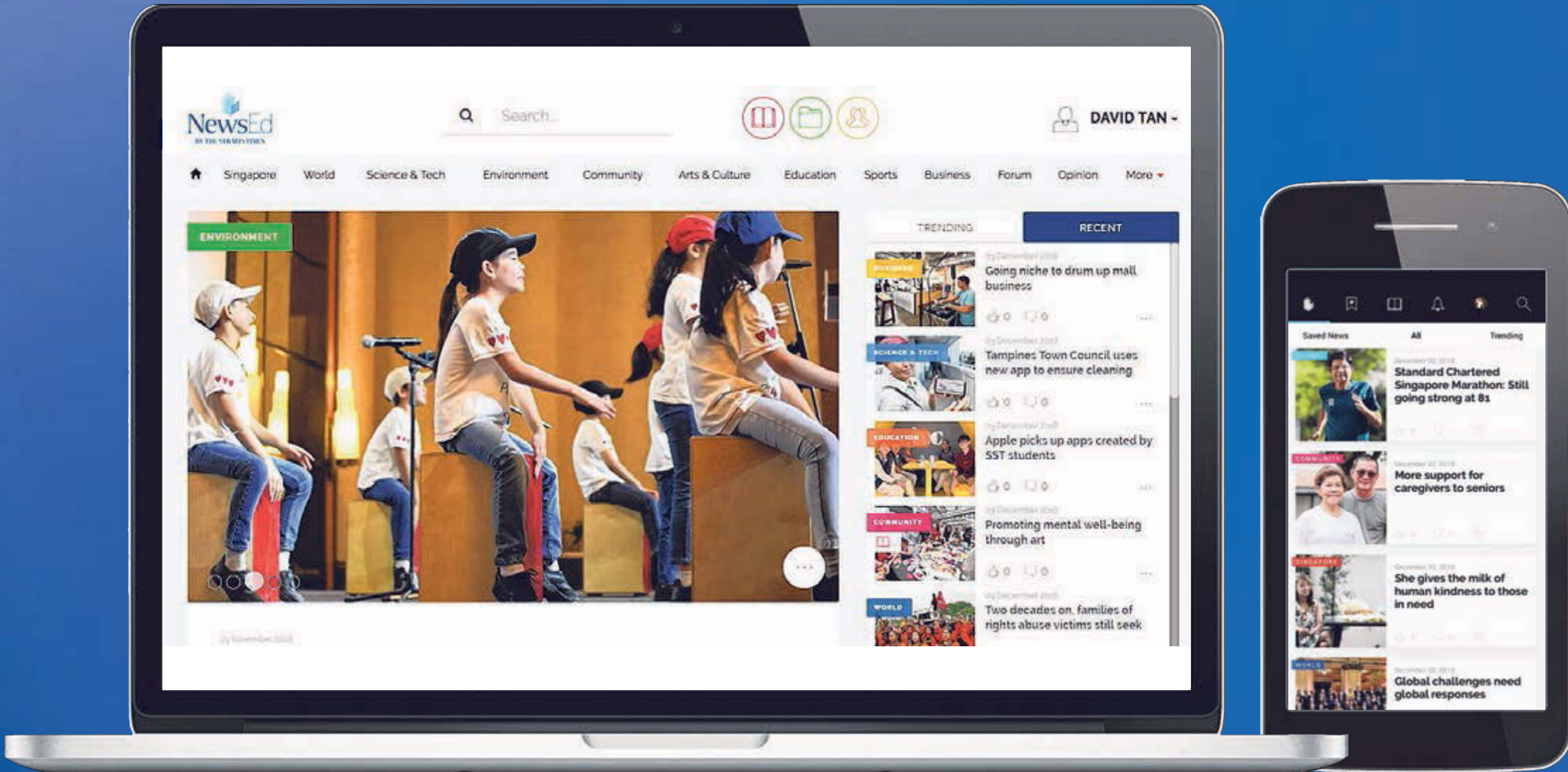
Dr Benny Loo
Chairman, Doctors-in-training Committee
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ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

Shadow lines

A worker toils along a footpath lined with trees in Woodlands as the early morning sun casts shadows on the grass. Woodlands was previously considered an outlying rural suburb of Singapore but is today an up and coming suburb near nature.

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C2

Gender diversity

Still more work needed to change mindsets, say bosses

They say stereotypes have to be tackled, even amid rise in number of women on boards of firms here

Sue-Ann Tan

There is increasing gender diversity in companies here but more needs to be done to change mindsets and break stereotypes, business leaders said.

Their efforts to include more women on boards and in the workplace have paid off, but challenges remain.

There are signs of progress, with four Singapore firms making it onto the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index released last month. The index distinguishes companies committed to transparency in gender reporting

and advancing women's equality.

Singtel, United Overseas Bank, developer City Developments Limited (CDL) and DBS Group Holdings made the cut this time. CDL and DBS were also on the index last year, when it was first introduced.

There are now 230 firms from 10 sectors across 36 countries and regions listed.

Singapore's Diversity Action Committee, which was recently renamed the Council for Board Diversity, has recorded an increase in the number of women on the boards of listed companies here. The proportion of women on the boards of Singapore's top 100 listed companies has doubled to 15 per cent over the past four years.

Companies with female directors said the gender representation is important in both their management and workforce.

A DBS spokesman said: "Asia is

WIDER TALENT POOL

Asia is talent-short, and so looking far and wide is crucial to finding the best. Embracing gender diversity allows us to tap a wider talent pool where others may not be looking. It (also) helps ensure that as an organisation, we have a multiplicity of views and perspectives that is helpful in preventing group-think.



ADBSSPOKESMAN

talent-short, and so looking far and wide is crucial to finding the best. Embracing gender diversity allows us to tap a wider talent pool where others may not be looking. It (also) helps ensure that as an organisation, we have a multiplicity of views and perspectives that is helpful in preventing group-think.

The spokesman added that having women in leadership can also inspire their younger colleagues with the knowledge that they can rise based on merit.

Singtel chief executive Chua Sock Koong said the workforce should also reflect the firm's client base.

"Women typically make up half our customer base, so it is critical that companies should have boards and a workforce that are reflective of the stakeholders that we serve and our society at large," she noted.

Despite the growing numbers of women on boards and in the work-

force, and the awareness of the benefits of such diversity, companies said more needs to be done.

CDL group chief executive Sherman Kwek said: "For a leading business hub like Singapore, the pace of change should certainly be faster since empowering women in the workplace is in line with Singapore's goal to build a more inclusive society."

He added that barriers include male leaders hiring in their own image as well as misconceptions about the perceived lack of qualified women candidates in the talent pool.

"Women can face an 'emotional tightrope' where they are often labelled as being too emotional, yet they also cannot appear to be too masculine," he said. "Another common bias is the notion of a 'maternal wall' where women employees are presumed to lose their career focus upon having children, which may not always be the case."

Ms Chua said that in the technology industry, women make up just one-third of the workforce, and the challenge is getting more girls into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem) education.

She added: "Tackle stereotypes about a career in Stem such as the perception that boys are better than girls in these fields. Offer mentorship programmes to inspire careers in Stem and provide support in the workplace."

suetan@sph.com.sg



(From left) City Developments head of property development Lee Mei Ling, chief sustainability officer Esther An, group chief financial officer Yiong Yim Ming, group chief executive officer Sherman Kwek and CEO for commercial Yvonne Ong. The company has been on the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index for two years running. PHOTO: CITY DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED

Efforts by CDL, DBS paying off

In City Developments Limited (CDL), women form 70 per cent of the workforce.

They are making their presence felt on the corporate floor as well, with females making up 30 per cent of the board, surpassing the Council for Board Diversity's recommended target of 20 per cent for listed companies by 2020.

Its achievements have put the firm on the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index for two years running.

While this might seem surprising

for a firm that develops property, CDL said such gender diversity is the result of various targeted initiatives that make representation the cornerstone of the workforce.

CDL created an internal Diversity and Inclusion Task Force in 2017 that promotes awareness and adoption of diversity and inclusion within the workplace and the wider community. It also has a Board Diversity Policy, where the nominating committee will ask for candidates of both genders to be fielded for consideration, among other guidelines to ensure the board is balanced.

CDL group chief executive Sherman Kwek said: "Change starts from the top and for this issue to gain traction, it is vital for business leaders to overcome their traditional biases

and recognise the value that women can bring to an organisation.

"We have always believed that diversity is a key attribute of a well-functioning board as it enhances the quality of decisions by harnessing a wider variety of skills and experiences."

Besides the workforce and management, CDL also established Women4Green, Singapore's first network for women in sustainability, in 2017.

Mr Kwek said: "We believe that creating and expanding opportunities for women are fundamental to sustainable growth. Through its activities, the network brings together women executives in various green industries to drive sustainable practices for climate action, responsible

business and social change."

DBS Group has also been on the Index for two years. It said it helps to increase gender diversity by having a workplace culture that is flexible to meet women's needs.

Two women are on its 11-member board. In Singapore, almost 60 per cent of the bank's overall workforce and around 40 per cent of senior management are women.

A spokesman said: "These (policies) include flexible time, part-time, work-from-home and sabbatical leave arrangements. We seek to make it easy for our women colleagues to come back to a comparable job even after taking time out from their careers."

Sue-Ann Tan

Taking a stand for gender progress

Singtel director Teo Swee Lian made sure she had the last laugh when a man kept making sexist jokes at a meeting where she was the only woman present.

She communicated her discomfort by saying she was heading to the washroom and they could joke all they wanted, but when she got back they would get down to serious business.

"I believe my point was taken because when I returned, the joking stopped," she said.

Ms Teo, a non-executive and independent director of the telco, told The Straits Times: "There are some situations where you just have to laugh things off and not take it too personally, but you also have to make it clear that you have a firm stand."

She is one of four female directors on the 11-strong Singtel board. About a third of employees in the firm are women.

Singtel was one of four Singapore companies listed on the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index last month.

Ms Chua Sock Koong, Singtel's chief executive, said the company has put initiatives in place to boost gender diversity.

At least one female director is included on the company's board nominations committee to ensure female candidates with the requisite background and skill sets are considered. Other initiatives include a Women in Leadership Series that gives female employees networking, coaching and mentoring opportunities.

Ms Teo said: "I'd like to urge companies to get even more progressive. If you are looking to include a woman on your board, why not two? This would make it less daunting for women to step forward, say, in a situation where they would be the only woman on an all-male board."

"Sometimes men forget to leave their 'locker room mentality' aside and it can be intimidating for some women."

While she hopes more companies are progressive, Ms Teo added that it must never be about choosing a woman just for her gender. She herself spent years as a central banker and applied her expertise in governance and risk management to help the telco's senior management.

"I don't consider myself a luminary or trophy board member. I would like to think I have contributed by helping steward and steer, in terms of assisting senior management to join the dots."

Sue-Ann Tan

SEE BUSINESS C2



Singtel director Teo Swee Lian hopes more companies can be progressive, but adds that it must never be about choosing a woman just for her gender.

70%

Percentage of women in the workforce at CDL.

30%

Percentage of women on the CDL board.

40%

Percentage of women in senior management at DBS in Singapore.

60%

Percentage of women in DBS' overall workforce in Singapore.

Gender diversity
Breaking the old boys' network

A conscious effort has to be made to break the “old boys’ network” in companies, United Overseas Bank (UOB) director Lim Hwee Hua told The Straits Times.

While firms here have put measures in place to help women advance in their careers and work flexibly when needed, she said old practices still have to change so more women can be included in management.

“A conscious effort must be made to break the mould of an old boys’ network,” said Mrs Lim, who has been a UOB director since 2014, adding that companies with no female directors would “do well to have at least one”.

“There is no shortage of women with the requisite skills and experience to benefit companies,” she said. “Moreover, women offer a complementary mix of inter-personal and communication styles.

“Yet, the numbers are still underwhelming for a variety of reasons – an inability to identify suitable women directors using the usual informal or friendly networks, or a psychological bias towards male candidates.”

Having sat on various boards since 1996, Mrs Lim cautioned against having a female director as a token gesture just to hit a quota.

“It is important to have diversity, not for diversity’s sake, but because a board with a diversity of skills and experiences can truly help a company to chart and implement its long-term strategy, while taking into consideration the risks assumed,” she said.

“Gender diversity is part of this useful diversity. As the pool of suitable women candidates enlarges, I am optimistic that more women will be represented on boards.”

UOB was one of the new companies on the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index this year.

Almost 70 per cent of its employees across its 19 markets are female, with one in three senior management roles held by a woman. Also, 45 per cent of department heads are women, and more than half of all new hires last year were women.

Mr Dean Tong, UOB’s head of group human resources, said in an e-mail: “We know that family and personal time is important and our flexible work options... enable our colleagues to balance their work, family and personal commitments better.”

He added that UOB ensures “equal recognition and opportunities for women to progress in their careers”.

Sue-Ann Tan



UOB director Lim Hwee Hua says old practices have to change so more women can be included in management. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAWDHARY



Hyflux owes \$900 million in principal value to perp and preference shareholders who were told last month they would lose everything if the company is liquidated. Another \$265 million is owed to bond holders. In total, Hyflux's debt amounts to \$2.95 billion as of end-March last year. LIANHE ZAOBAO FILE PHOTO

Hyflux queried over CEO's remuneration

Sias also flags ‘faults and defects’ in troubled firm’s assets, seeks answers on board accountability

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

The Securities Investors Association (Singapore), or Sias, has raised a slew of questions regarding troubled water treatment company Hyflux – from its chief executive’s “large remuneration” even as the firm racked up debt and losses, to the “faults and defects” in its assets.

In a letter signed off by its president David Gerald and on behalf of the company’s stakeholders, Sias expressed concern that questions on the company’s operations, the valuation of its assets and the accountability of its board of directors have yet to be addressed.

These are issues that would help securities holders make an informed decision on Hyflux’s ongoing debt revamp, Sias noted, posing a list of over 30 questions to the company’s board and its advisers.

Among them are whether chief executive Olivia Lum will have a role in Hyflux after its restructuring and why she is not contributing her gains from the company to this process. Sias flagged that Ms Lum received over \$60 million in dividends “in the time that shareholders and bond holders have seen their entire investment destroyed”.

In 2017, when Hyflux reported losses of \$115.6 million, Ms Lum received between \$750,000 and \$1 million in salary, benefits and bonuses, Sias said.

“How was Hyflux able to justify such large remuneration given (its) financial position and the performance of (its) businesses and assets?” Sias asked, questioning as well if there has been an independent investigation on the role of key executives in the firm’s collapse.

The letter presents the latest challenge to Hyflux’s restructuring attempt after filing for bankruptcy protection and suspending share trading. The company has around 50,000 ordinary shareholders, bond holders, perpetual securities holders and preference shareholders. It owes \$900 million in principal



\$60m

Sum in dividends that Hyflux CEO, Olivia Lum received “in the time that shareholders and bond holders have seen their entire investment destroyed”, according to Sias.

pal value to perp and preference shareholders who were told last month they would lose everything if the company is liquidated. Another \$265 million is owed to bond holders. In total, Hyflux’s debt amounts to \$2.95 billion as of end-March last year.

Sias in its latest letter said there appeared to be “material faults and defects” in almost every Hyflux asset.

They either have operational problems and cannot operate at or close to capacity – as is the case of projects in Qurayyat, Oman, and Magtaa, Algeria – or are loss-making and cannot service their debt with cashflow from operations. This is the case for the Tuaspring Desalination Plant in Singapore, as well as the Tianjin Dagang Desalination Plant in China. Other projects are not complete, referring to the TuasOne Waste-to-Energy Plant in Singapore and operations in Tlemcen, Algeria.

“What level of scrutiny did the board of directors apply to the operations of the main assets of Hyflux? Why were these faults and defects not announced or described in annual reports?” asked Sias. It questioned how pricing for engineering, procurement and construction contracts were made and if these were board-approved in large projects.

Another issue was why the board continued paying dividends when operating cashflow was negative, and how it was possible for Hyflux to report profits each year prior to 2017 despite negative operating cashflow.

Given that Hyflux raised \$500 million of perpetual securities and \$400 million of preference shares that are outstanding, Sias asked how the funds were used, compared to what was set out in prospectuses.

Among its other queries, Sias asked when directors or management knew Hyflux would not meet its debt obligations, and why the company did not seek help earlier.

byseow@sph.com.sg

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MarketsInsights

All eyes on US-China trade talks

Cautious mood likely this week; data from China, Japan, Britain and US also in focus

Navin Sregantan

Markets in Asia return for a first full week of trading this month after last week's festivities.

Key events this week include a number of data releases in China, the possibility of another United States government shutdown and British Prime Minister Theresa May's revised Brexit deal.

But the one likely to garner the most attention is the trade talks in Beijing between the US and China.

Last week was characterised by relatively cautious trading as concerns about global growth and geopolitical risks, as well as rekindled US-China trade tensions, continued to weigh on investors' minds.

FXTM research analyst Lukman Otunuga expects this overhang to carry over to the new week. He said: "Global equity markets may remain vulnerable to downside shocks as robust corporate earnings are overshadowed by trade tensions and growth fears."

"With the deadline to the 90-day US-China trade truce slowly approaching, markets will most likely be highly reactive and volatile to trade developments."

This is likely to keep investors interested in defensive plays like Singapore REITs and Asian dividend stocks, DBS Bank chief investment officer Hou Wey Fook said in a note last Friday.

In its weekly outlook, the UOB global economics and markets research team said there will be a

focus in Singapore on "the news flow regarding the FY2019 Singapore Budget on Feb 18".

Last Friday on Wall Street, equity benchmarks managed to shake off scepticism over the two largest economies reaching a trade deal before the March 1 deadline as corporate results continued to be largely positive.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 63.2 points, or 0.25 per cent, to 25,106.33; the S&P 500 gained 1.83 points, or 0.07 per cent, to 2,707.88; and the Nasdaq Composite added 9.85 points, or 0.14 per cent, to 7,298.20. For the week, the Dow added 0.17 per cent, S&P 500 rose 0.05 per cent and Nasdaq gained 0.47 per cent.

While the Singapore economic docket is almost empty for the week, with December's retail sales figures due tomorrow, China's return from the week-long Chinese New Year break today will spell a busy week for data releases.

In China, trade, inflation and foreign reserve figures for last month are due. In particular, attention will be paid to Thursday's trade numbers from the first month of 2019, with exports likely to continue their year-on-year declines.

IG market strategist Pan Jingyi said this serves as "a fresh reminder of the ailments the country continues to face amid tariffs imposition and the broad slowdown".

Elsewhere in Asia, investors are likely to take direction from Japan's fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) numbers due on Thursday.

"While the sentiment remains rather mixed towards the Japanese market, Q4 GDP could be one to show some respite, expected to revert to growth after a weak Q3 period," said Ms Pan.

Fourth-quarter GDP figures for Malaysia, India and Taiwan are due this week too.

In Britain, where Mrs May aims to get the House of Commons' approval for her revised Brexit deal by Wednesday, GDP, inflation and retail sales data will be released this week. The US will also release the same set of data this week.

Japan's markets will be closed today for the National Foundation Day holiday.

navinsre@sph.com.sg

Downside Risks

Global equity markets may remain vulnerable to downside shocks as robust corporate earnings are overshadowed by trade tensions and growth fears. With the deadline to the 90-day US-China trade truce slowly approaching, markets will most likely be highly reactive and volatile to trade developments.



FXTM RESEARCH ANALYST
LUKMAN OTUNUGA

Courts Asia swings into red with \$171k loss in Q3

Retailer Courts Asia posted a net loss of \$171,000 for its third quarter ended Dec 31, compared with a net profit of \$3.51 million for the same period a year ago, on the back of lower gross profit margins and revenue as well as higher income tax expenses.

Revenue for the group stood at \$175.3 million for the third quarter, down 6.2 per cent from the previous year. Singapore sales, which contributed 76.2 per cent of the group's revenue in the quarter, dipped 0.7 per cent, due mainly to lower earned service charge income.

Malaysia revenue, which accounted for 20.4 per cent of group revenue in the third quarter, fell 22.2 per cent in ringgit terms, weighed down by lower earned service charge income and lower sales of goods and other services.

Indonesia revenue, with 3.4 per cent of the total revenue, declined 7.3 per cent in rupiah terms, mainly due to lower earned service charge income and infocommunications sales.

Loss per share stood at 0.03 cent for the quarter, compared with earnings per share of 0.68 cent a year ago.

In its outlook, the group said Courts Singapore will continue to navigate the competitive retail environment by continuing to invest in five key areas, namely expansion of category solutions-selling, driving omni-channel, making off-line store experience centres, driv-

ing furniture reinvention and leveraging credit as its unique selling proposition.

As for Malaysia, the group said it was keeping up its transformation of the business. A task force was set up in January last year to look into business processes and operations and execute transformation initiatives. Since April last year, the group has closed 12 underperforming stores, bringing the store count down to 54 in Malaysia. It also tightened credit-sanctioning policies within the financial year.

In Indonesia, Courts Asia said no new stores have been opened in the last nine months as the group consolidates its position in the market.

Last month, Japanese electronics retailer Nijima Corp announced a bid for Courts Asia at 20.5 cents per share as it seeks to gain a foothold in South-east Asia. Nijima has received an undertaking from Courts' majority shareholder Singapore Retail Group (SRG), which has agreed to irrevocably tender all its 382 million shares, translating to a 73.8 per cent stake in the company. Once SRG accepts it, the offer will turn unconditional.

After the offer is completed, Nijima may undertake a "strategic and operational review of Courts, with a view to realising synergies, economies of scale, cost efficiencies and growth potential", it said.

Courts Asia's counter closed unchanged at 20 cents last Friday, before its results were released.



The owners of the 226-unit Spanish Village are working to lower the reserve price by about 6 per cent to \$828 million from \$882 million, says sole marketing agent Edmund Tie & Company. The development is in District 10 and located near the Botanic Gardens and popular schools. PHOTO: EDMUND TIE & COMPANY

Spanish Village makes third attempt to go en bloc

Derek Wong

With last July's property cooling measures in mind, the owners of Spanish Village in Farrer Road have put the freehold private estate up for sale en bloc again, while working to lower the reserve price – just like two other collective sale re-launches so far this year.

"Despite the cooling measures introduced last year, the collective sale committee (CSC) had come to a decision to launch the tender the third time as it is the final chance that Spanish Village, being a choice site with many positive attributes, can have a shot at the market this round," said its sole

marketing agent Edmund Tie & Company today.

The owners of the estate's 226 units are in the process of signing a supplementary agreement to lower the reserve price of the development by about 6 per cent to \$828 million from \$882 million, it added.

Last month, the 48-unit Gilstead Court near Novena MRT re-launched its collective sale, announcing that its CSC had proposed lowering the reserve price to \$153 million from \$168 million.

More than 60 per cent of the owners had signed the supplemental agreement to do so as of the end of last month, but lowering the price requires the approval of at least 80 per cent of the owners

in terms of overall share value and total floor area.

The CSC for the 120-unit Lakeside Apartments in Yuan Ching Road also proposed cutting the property's reserve price to \$205 million from \$240 million.

As of the end of last month, 70 per cent of the owners had agreed to do so, shy of the 80 per cent required.

The tender exercises for Gilstead Court and Lakeside Apartments will both close on Feb 27.

This is the third stab at a collective sale for Spanish Village, which was built in the 1980s with an area of 331,457 sq ft. Its current guide price of \$882 million translates to a land rate of \$1,721 per sq ft per plot

ratio, inclusive of a development charge of about \$30 million, said Edmund Tie & Company.

The firm said the Land Transport Authority gave in-principle approval last September for 703 units to be built on the site based on a pre-application feasibility study.

Spanish Village is in District 10 and located near the Botanic Gardens. It is also close to Nanyang Primary School, Nanyang Girls' High School and Raffles Girls' Primary School. The site is near Holland Road, the Pan Island Expressway and Ayer Rajah Expressway.

The tender exercise for the site will close on March 11 at 3pm.

wderek@sph.com.sg

REMINDER ADVERTISEMENT DATED 11 FEBRUARY 2019

Voluntary Conditional General Offer for M1 Limited

On 28 December 2018, Connectivity Pte. Ltd. (the **"Offeror"**) announced its firm intention to make the voluntary conditional general offer (the **"Offer"**) for all the issued and paid up ordinary shares in the capital of M1 Limited (the **"Company"**) (excluding treasury shares) (**"Shares"**), other than those Shares already owned, controlled or agreed to be acquired by the Offeror, its related corporations and their respective nominees.

This Reminder Advertisement (**"Advertisement"**) should be read in conjunction with the offer document dated 7 January 2019 (**"Offer Document"**). Unless otherwise defined in this Advertisement, all capitalised terms shall bear the same meanings as ascribed to them in the Offer Document.

If you are in any doubt about the Offer or the action you should take, you should consult your stockbroker, bank manager, solicitor, accountant, tax adviser or other professional adviser immediately.

For each Offer Share

S\$2.06 in cash (the "Offer Price")

A

On 22 January 2019, the Offeror announced that it does not intend to increase the Offer Price of S\$2.06 in cash per Offer Share under any circumstances whatsoever.

B

Shareholders should consider the Company's circular (**"Offeree Circular"**) dated 21 January 2019 in relation to the Offer, including the advice of CLSA Singapore Pte Ltd, the independent financial adviser (**"IFA"**) to the directors of the Company who are considered independent for the purposes of the Offer (**"Independent Directors"**), and the recommendation of the Independent Directors in their entirety before taking any action.

Acceptances of the Offer should be received by

5.30 P.M. (SINGAPORE TIME) ON 18 FEBRUARY 2019

or such later date(s) as may be announced from time to time by or on behalf of the Offeror.

Any inquiries relating to the Offer should be directed during office hours to:

DBS Bank Ltd.
Strategic Advisory

United Overseas Bank Limited
Mergers & Acquisitions

Credit Suisse (Singapore) Limited
Investment Banking and Capital Markets

Tel: (65) 6682 8999

Tel: (65) 6539 7066

Tel: (65) 6212 2000

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The information in this Advertisement is qualified by, and should be read in conjunction with, the full information contained in the Offer Document. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict between the terms of this Advertisement and the Offer Document, the terms set out in the Offer Document shall prevail. Nothing in this Advertisement is intended to be, or shall be taken as, advice, recommendation or solicitation to the Shareholders or any other party. DBS Bank Ltd. (**"DBS"**) and United Overseas Bank Limited (**"UOB"**) are acting for and on behalf of Keppel Corporation Limited, and Credit Suisse (Singapore) Limited (**"CS"**) is acting for and on behalf of Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Each of DBS, UOB and CS do not purport to advise the Shareholders and/or any other person.

Shareholders are advised to exercise caution when dealing in their Shares and refrain from taking any action in relation to their Shares which may be prejudicial to their interests. The views of the IFA and the Independent Directors are contained within the Offeree Circular. Shareholders may wish to consider their advice before taking any action in relation to the Offer.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The directors of the Offeror (including any director who may have delegated detailed supervision of the preparation of this Advertisement) have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the facts stated and opinions expressed in this Advertisement are fair and accurate and that there are no other material facts not contained in this Advertisement, the omission of which would make any statement in this Advertisement misleading.

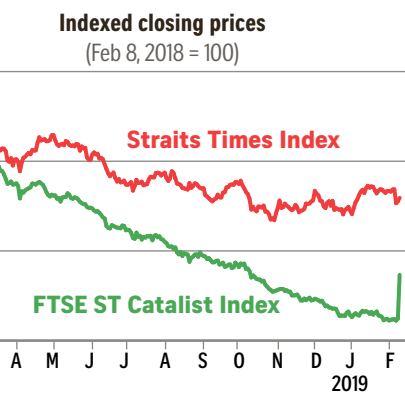
Where any information has been extracted or reproduced from published or otherwise publicly available sources or obtained from the Company, the sole responsibility of the directors of the Offeror has been to ensure through reasonable enquiries that such information is accurately extracted from such sources or, as the case may be, reflected or reproduced in this Advertisement.

The directors of the Offeror jointly and severally accept responsibility accordingly.

WEEKLY

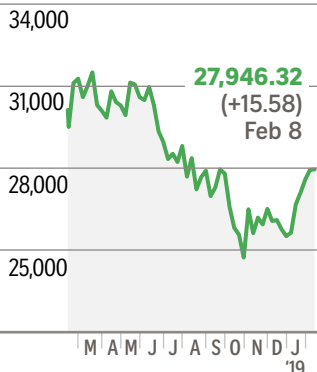
Straits Times Index
Feb 8, 2019
3,202.04 ▲
+13.36 (+0.42%)
Current streak
2 days
Week high
3,202.04
Week low
3,184.56
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)

STI / Catalyst

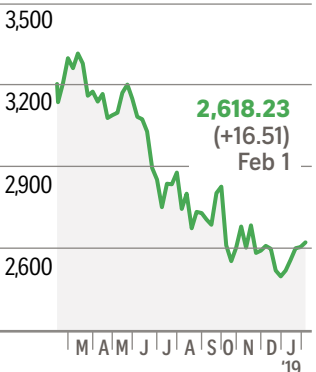


FTSE ST Catalyst Index
Feb 8, 2019
301.74 ▲
+1.50 (+0.50%)
Current streak
3 days
Week high
301.90
Week low
300.24
52-week high
469.26 (Feb 21, 2018)
52-week low
300.24 (Feb 1, 2019)

Hang Seng



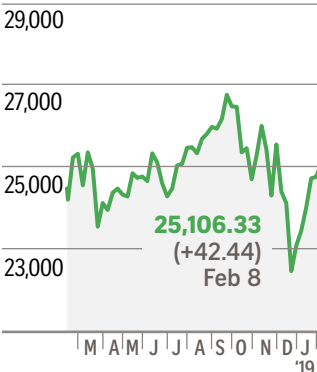
Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



NOTE: Based on Friday's figures. Source: BLOOMBERG

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	275	+2	28339	5.8	1.3
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	190	+3	26436	4.6	1
380	298	Capitaland	332	-3	15754	3.6	0.7
243	195	CapitaMall Trust	240	+4	26480	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	916	+11	4895	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	234	-5	16217	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2430	+23	7875	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	-5	8346	5	1
133	85.5	Genting Sing	111	+1	57652	3.2	1.8
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	-0.5	26873	3.2	0.6
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US26	+0.5	11306	10.1	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US706	+23	5627	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6718	+49	606	2.4	0.7
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3851	+18	462	0.8	0.4
3828	2766	Jardine C&C	3742	-9	514	3.1	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	604 cd	unch	8346	5	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1148	+3	7225	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	486	+4	4006	3.7	3.4
790	672	SGX	761	+2	4486	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	976	+13	2733	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	249	+1	5224	5.2	1.1
376	321	ST Engineering	375	+1	9394	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	255	-3	7374	2	0.7
358	283	Singtel	306	+4	49402	6.7	1.7
92	57.5	ThaiBev	72 xd	-4	93764	0.9	1.8
3037	2380	UOB	2524	-10	5038	4	12
898	591	UOL	658	-6	2758	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1572	-16	3135	3.8	2
335	297	Wilmar Intl	329	-5	7750	3	1
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	145	+3	52943	3.1	1.1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	275	+2	28339	5.8	1.3
120	105	Ascott Reit	116 xd	-4	12796	6.2	1
74.5	59	Bumitama Agri	68.5	+0.5	811	1.1	1.6
178	143	DL HT Trust	162 xd	-5	8333	-	1.1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	190	+3	26436	4.6	1
380	298	Capitaland	332	-3	15754	3.6	0.7
243	195	CapitaMall Trust	240	+4	26480	4.8	1.2
164	133	CapitaR China Tr	148 cd	unch	9699	6.9	1
1359	780	CityDev	916	+11	4895	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	234	-5	16217	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2430	+23	7875	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	-5	8346	5	1
73.5	59	Far East HTrust	66.5	+1	3505	-	0.8
183	150	First Resources	171	unch	539	4	2.2
231	212	Fraser's Cpt Tr	226	unch	3750	5.3	108.7
112	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	108	-3	23689	6.3	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing	111	+1	57652	3.2	1.8
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	-0.5	26873	3.2	0.6
224	167	GuocoLand Ltd	185	+4	308	3.8	0.6
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US26	+0.5	11306	10.1	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US706	+23	5627	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6718	+49	606	2.4	0.7
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3851	+18	462	0.8	0.4
3828	2766	Jardine C&C	3742	-9	514	3.1	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	604 cd	unch	8346	5	1
124	108	Keppel Reit	121	+3	36776	4.6	0.9
215	151	MI	205 cd	unch	1707	5.5	3.6
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US196	+3	166	1.5	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr	182	+8	35231	5	12
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	202	+1	10659	5.8	14
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	139	+2	32927	5.5	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	126	+3	26123	5.9	1
83	73	NetLink NBN Tr	78	unch	6329	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1148	+3	7225	3.2	1.2
199	136	OUE	154	+2	470	1.9	0.4
87	64.5	OUE HT Trust	71.5 xd	-2.5	3802	-	1
260	157	Olam Intl	187	+3	118	4	1
59	28	Oxley	30	unch	1470	5	0.9
291	256	ParkwayLife Reit	284	-1	2078	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	110	-1	3021	2	2.6
564	455	SATS	486	+4	4006	3.7	3.4
790	672	SGX	761	+2	4486	3.9	9.5
1184	914	SIA	976	+13	2733	4.1	0.8
3037	2380	SIA Engineering	252	+2	530	2	1
292	231	SPH	249	+1	5224	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	1526	5.4	1.1
376	321	ST Engineering	375	+1	9394	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	255	-3	7374	2	0.7
273	149	Sembcorp Marine	158	-1	13484	1.3	14
58	39	Silverlake Axis	48.5	unch	13816	6.2	7
147	88.5	SingPost	95 cd	-1.5	8318	3.7	1.3
286	158	StarHub	194	+12	10535	8.2	5.9
74	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	71 xd	-1	4892	6.4	0.8
199	163	Suntec Reit	192	+2	18419	5.2	0.9
92	57.5	ThaiBev	72 xd	-4	93764	0.9	2.1
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	unch	48887	2.8	1
3037	2380	UOB	2524	-10	5038	4	12
898	591	UOL	658	-6	2758	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1572	-16	3135	3.8	2
335	297	Wilmar Intl	329	-5	7750	3	1
226	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	1369	3.9	0.5
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	145	+3	52943	3.1	1.1
182	116	Yanlord Land	133	+5	7577	5.1	0.5

Price and volume movers

	VOL	CLOSE(\$)	CHANGE	+/-
Jasper Inv	8,769.3	0.006	+0.002	+50.00
Wilton Resources	436.7	0.045	+0.015	+50.00
Sakae	7.5	0.145	+0.025	+20.83
KimHeng Offshore	1233.0	0.068	-0.005	-6.85
Ellipsiz	245.5	0.440	-0.030	-6.58
Transcorp	40.0	0.006	-0.002	-25.00
OneApex	25.0	0.220	+0.010	+4.76
ZICO Hldgs	125.0	0.145	+0.005	+3.57
Synagie	469.1	0.134	-0.009	-6.29
Hong Leong Asia	2,970.6	0.630	+0.035	+5.88

Shows the stocks with the highest combination of price change and of daily activity relative to the three-month average volume

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	140 cd	+1	815	7.4	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	55	unch	1578	7	0.6
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	84.5	+1	1139	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	113	+2	5932	5.4	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.3	+0.3	11850	48.9	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59.5	+0.5	543	1.7	0.8
319	115	Best World	319	+49	13529	1.3	11.4
85.5	76	Boustead	80	+0.5	376	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	86.5	-1	148	8.1	2.3
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	558	+2	51	3.2	1.1
87	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72	+1	4884	8.2	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	77	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	118	+1	2342	3.8	1
46	29.5	China Everbright	36	-1	10038	1.4	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	128	-1	1856	2.3	1.4
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	69.5	-1	2965	5.8	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35.5	unch	11352	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	585	+1	21	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	21 cd	+0.5	1549	8.8	1.3
77.5	67.5	EC World Reit	73.5	+1	665	8.2	0.8
59	47	ESR-REIT	51.5	unch	10515	7.5	1.1
140	92	First Reit	114	+4	2387	7.5	1.1
152	135	Fraser's Com Tr	150	+1	8582	6.4	1
80	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	73	-1	1145	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.6	-0.3	1903	5.1	1.2
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	77	-0.5	839	3	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	unch	218	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	92.5	+0.5	10424	2.7	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	265	unch	190	4.9	0.6
80.5	71	IREIT Global	75.5	+0.5	515	7.9	1.1
37.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	21.5	-0.5	445	-	0.3
84	43	Japfa	79.5	-2.5	4355	0.6	1.5
76.5	49	KSH	51.5	unch	332	4.3	0.9
85	53	Keppel-KBS Reit USD	66.5	+0.5	1233	9.4	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	144	unch	14129	5.1	1.3
189	132	Keppel T&T	188	unch	603	-	1.2
11.9	7	KrisEnergy	8.3	-0.2	24221	-	1
71	44.5	Lian Beng	48	-1	2418	4.7	0.4
41	18	Lippo Malls Tr	25.5	+1	11825	13.5	0.9
53	30	MM2 Asia	32.5	+1	1883	-	1.8
95	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	85	+0.5	3803	6.5	0.8
120	95	Metro	99.5	unch	572	5	0.6
21.5	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	OUE Com Reit	50 xd	-1.5	6339	7	0.7
66	54	PEC	57	-0.5	67	3.5	0.6
39.5	17	POSH	18.5	-0.5	210	-	0.5
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	49	-1	722	3.3	3.5
110	55.5	QAF Ltd	70.5	+0.5	229	7.1	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	112	-2	43	2.1	3.7
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	32.5	-0.5	510	-	0.6
45	38	Sabana Reit	41.5	+0.5	1841	7.7	0.7
119	90	Sheng Siong	111	-1	1575	3	6.1
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandress	5.3	-0.6	7013	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60	-0.5	1990	8.8	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	88.5	+1.5	523	-	0.7
46.5	32.5	Tuan Sing	38.5 cd	-1	1796	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	66	+3	12448	7.6	1.6
112	58.5	Valuetronics	73	+3	10808	6.2	16.71
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.3	+0.4	12821	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	32.5	-0.5	9504	0.8	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.6	-0.1	982	-	0.9

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OBITUARIES

Thank You

On behalf of the family, we sincerely express our deepest gratitude for the condolences, prayers, and messages of comfort that we received for the loss of our Father, Grandfather and Great-Grandfather.



Eka Tjipta Widjaja

We also express our deepest gratitude for the support of our friends and associates who were present throughout his wake and during the funeral service at his final resting place in the family cemetery at Desa Marga Mulya, Kabupaten Karawang, Jawa Barat on February 2, 2019.

May Almighty God return your kindness and generosity.

The Family of the Late Mr. Eka Tjipta Widjaja

All donations received will be used to support victims of natural disasters through Eka Tjipta Foundation.

10th Anniversary
In Loving Memory



Kng Pei Mei, Doreen
11 February 2009

Mum, your smile that brought us so much joy
Mum, your love that you gave so freely
Mum, your unfailing support that guided us through difficult times
Much has changed in the decade since you left but you live on in our memories.
We miss you now as we always have. Until we meet...

Your loving family

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"
2 Corinthians 12:9



M.A. Jane Edwin
Age: 91

Passed away peacefully on 10 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Beloved Husband: C.M. Sirisena Thedias (deceased)

Children & Spouses: Sucila (Susan) & Francis Sebastian, Betty (Asoka), Ariyadasa (Das) & Yvonne Tryman, Gunasena (Sena) & Rosanna Piol and Wilfred (Willy)

Grandchildren & Spouses: Michele Desilver, Cheryl Lamiroy & Eddy Lamiroy, Pearl Van Beeck & Jozef Van Beeck, Joanne Sebastian, Staffan Naes, Kristoffer & Ida Hovinger Tryman, Jessica Sebastian, Bianca Tryman and Upasanthie Sirisena

Great-grandchildren: Amber Van Beeck, Jaden Lamiroy, Femke Van Beeck, Caitlin Lamiroy, Brooklyn Lamiroy, Vida Van Beeck, August Van Beeck, Melvin Hovinger Tryman and Mila Hovinger Tryman

Caregiver: Suratmi
And all relatives and friends.

Wake at Block 733 Yishun Avenue 5, Singapore 760733.
Cortege leaves on Wednesday 13 February 2019 at 3.15pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 3.45pm.

In Loving Memory Of



William Tan Cheng Hock & Katherine Koh Swee Hoe
(21/07/31 - 11/02/2016) (30/09/32 - 06/12/2001)

Deeply missed and always remembered by children, grandchildren, siblings and loved ones.



SINTHAMANY D/O SINAPPAN
Age: 89

Departed on 28 Jan 2019
Dearly missed by Family, Relatives & Friends

KARUMATHI PRAYERS
Will be held on 11 February 2019 night
BLK 222 TOA PAYOH, Lor 8, #12-705, S310222

ATHMA SHANTHI POOJA
Will be held on 12 February 2019, 7.30pm at

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LLORIS THE HERO AS SPURS STAY IN HUNT

Goalkeeper saves Vardy's penalty as London side keep pace with leaders after 5th win in 6 games

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Tottenham 3
Leicester 1

LONDON • Tottenham kept alive their bid to gatecrash the Premier League title race after Davinson Sanchez's first goal for the club and Hugo Lloris' penalty save from Jamie Vardy inspired a 3-1 win over Leicester yesterday.

Christian Eriksen netted moments after the save and, although Vardy got one back, Son Heung-min's late strike ensured third-placed Spurs clinched a fifth win in their last six league games.

They are on 60 points, five off the top as they try to catch Liverpool

and Manchester City.

Their gritty success, despite injuries to key players Harry Kane and Dele Alli, was the ideal preparation for hosting Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League last 16 first leg on Wednesday.

Said Eriksen: "(Lloris) did save us a few times. Saving the penalty gave us confidence. I saw a stat that we have won the last three games in the last 10 minutes and, even today, we did that." On the title, he added: "Anything is possible."

With the Dortmund clash in mind, Mauricio Pochettino tweaked his team, leaving out Toby Alderweireld and Lucas Moura and recalling Fernando Llorente.

Llorente was caught napping early on when Harry Maguire evaded the striker and met James Maddison's free kick with a towering header that Lloris tipped over.

That chance was symptomatic of a disjointed start from Tottenham.

Harvey Barnes was allowed too

much space in the box as he raced onto a pass but wasted a gilt-edged chance with a poor finish.

Spurs, finally piecing together an incisive raid, were furious when Son's penalty appeal ended in a booking for diving after Maguire stuck out a leg to halt the South Korean.

Said Son: "It was a penalty. I was surprised to be given a yellow card. I was disappointed and angry, but we have to take that."

The hosts channelled their frustration into a sustained assault on the goal of Leicester, who have lost four of their last five league games to increase the pressure on under-fire boss Claude Puel.

And they were rewarded with a well-worked 33rd-minute opener.

Kieran Trippier's short corner found the unmarked Eriksen and he whipped a pin-point cross towards Sanchez six yards from goal.

Offside protests were in vain as the Colombian launched himself into a

diving header that flashed past Kasper Schmeichel.

Replays showed the player was just inside as he scored his first goal since his 2017 move from Ajax.

Leicester's positive start to the second half brought a golden opportunity to equalise with their 60th-minute penalty. A rapid exchange of passes opened up a chance for Maddison, prompting Jan Vertonghen to rashly bundle over the midfielder.

Vardy, the England striker who was surprisingly left on the bench for the first hour, had been warming up in preparation and was immediately introduced, jogging forward to take the ball from Maddison.

But Lloris came to Tottenham's rescue, diving to his right to keep out Vardy's spot kick.

And Tottenham made the most of their escape, with Eriksen's goal three minutes later and Son's break-away sealing the victory.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



WE DESERVED MORE

Lot of regrets. It was a game in our hands and we had a lot of chances and created a lot of good moves. We didn't find the good finish. I said to Jamie Vardy he can take the penalty. All the game, we had a lot of chances. But there are regrets after all these chances.



CLAUDE PUEL, Leicester manager, feeling hard done by the defeat.

Above: Davinson Sanchez stooping in ahead of Harry Maguire's challenge to head home Tottenham's opener past Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel. Spurs escaped a Leicester equaliser when Jamie Vardy (left) missed from the spot with his first touch of the game. PHOTOS: REUTERS, EPA-EFE

Saints fans face ban over Sala taunts

FOUR-DIGIT DRAW

Feb 10 2019

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LONDON • Southampton have promised to ban supporters who mocked the death of Emiliano Sala by making aeroplane gestures during their 2-1 Premier League home loss to Cardiff on Saturday.

The game was Cardiff's first since the Argentinian striker's body was identified by an English coroner on Thursday, a day after it was recovered from underwater wreckage in the English Channel.

After the game at the St Mary's Stadium, a video on social media appeared to show two men in the home section making aeroplane gestures in the direction of the away fans.

Southampton confirmed both fans had been spoken to by police and intended to take "an extremely firm stance" over the incident.

The club added in a statement: "Such behaviour has no place in our game and will not be tolerated at St Mary's. The club will be taking an extremely firm stance against anyone involved and intends to ban those supporters identified."

Cardiff had been given permission to wear shirts embroidered with a yellow daffodil, the national emblem of Wales and the team colour of Nantes. And a minute's silence in memory of Sala was impeccably observed before an emotional match for the Welsh club.

The plane carrying Sala from the French city of Nantes to Cardiff, his new club, disappeared near the British island of Guernsey on Jan 21.

Captain Sol Bamba dedicated his goal and the victory to Sala.

He said: "A lot of things were going through my mind.

"I knew Emiliano. I know he was looking up there. The victory and the goal is for him."

The Ivorian defender scored the 69th-minute opener only for the hosts to equalise in stoppage time. But Kenneth Zohore netted a 93rd-minute winner that took Cardiff out of the relegation zone.

"It has been a tough couple of weeks," Bamba told Sky Sports. "We knew we had to give our all today. It wasn't easy but a performance like this was very pleasing."

Cardiff boss Neil Warnock was proud of his side's resilience as he paid his own post-match tribute.

He said: "Emiliano was a fabulous lad, and it's appropriate we came down with our black armbands on



A Cardiff fan holding a scarf in remembrance of Emiliano Sala before the match at Southampton's St Mary's Stadium which Cardiff won 2-1. PHOTO: REUTERS

and put in a performance like that.

"We could easily have folded, but we were determined.

"We're limited, but you can't question their character and what they've got under their shirts because they've bags of heart."

Pilot David Ibbotson is still missing and the family's crowdfunding effort was boosted by the €27,000 (\$41,500) from French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe, who pledged the same amount to the Sala search. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MILNER PRAISES 'UNSTOPPABLE' FRONT THREE

Salah, Mane and Firmino 'brilliant' in 3-0 win over Cherries as Klopp hails Reds' character

LONDON • Before the Bournemouth game, Jurgen Klopp had called on his Liverpool side to enjoy the "excitement" of what promises to be a thrilling title race rather than being bogged down by the nerves of recent displays.

And the Reds duly answered the call at Anfield on Saturday, as they made a statement in not just returning to winning ways with a 3-0 victory over the Cherries, but the manner in which they regained a three-point lead over Manchester City at the top of the Premier League.

Sadio Mane opened the scoring with a clinical header, Georginio Wijnaldum's delightful dink doubled their lead and a flowing counter-attack three minutes into the second half delivered the third goal when Roberto Firmino's unselfish back-heel allowed Mohamed Salah to sweep home his 20th strike of the season.

Liverpool defender James Milner, deputising for Trent Alexander-Arnold at right-back, was thrilled by the combination work of Firmino, Mane and Salah.

"The front three were brilliant all day. Some of their link-up play was impossible to defend: the movement, the understanding, the one-touch play. Probably the only disap-

pointing thing is we didn't score more," he told the club's website.

Klopp said he had not needed to listen to any of the outside criticism which came Liverpool's way over the past few days to know a reaction was needed, but a reaction was what he got.

"We are very self-critical. It was clear we were not happy with the two performances," said the 51-year-old of the 1-1 draws with Leicester and West Ham. "We want to play convincing football, we want to perform and that was the reaction we wanted to show."

TERRIFIC THREESOME

Some of their link-up play was impossible to defend: the movement, the understanding, the one-touch play.



JAMES MILNER, on the telepathic partnership between Roberto Firmino, Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah.

Wijnaldum's return was Klopp's only change from the draw at West Ham on Monday and the Dutch midfielder's presence made a huge difference although he did not stay at the team's hotel the night before the game because of illness.

The 28-year-old capped his performance by giving his side some breathing space in stunning fashion 11 minutes before the break.

Andy Robertson picked out Wijnaldum's run into the box and he took a touch before delicately lifting a lob over Artur Boruc.

"After a couple of hours of sleep, he said, 'I feel good, I can play,'" Klopp said. "The doctor said, 'You are still infectious, stay away'. I was only concerned after he scored a goal and everybody gave him a hug."

"But playing a game like this shows us – the character and the mentality of these boys are the only reasons we are where we are."

Salah was denied by a string of Boruc saves, but finally extended his lead as the Premier League's top scorer after a wonderful flick from Firmino teed him up.

While City continue to fight for silverware on four fronts, a second warm weather training trip in a matter of weeks now lies in wait for Liverpool, thanks to their early exit from the FA Cup. The Reds are not in action again until Bayern Munich's visit for the Champions League last-16, first-leg clash on Feb 19. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Arsenal's Sead Kolasinac (right, standing) scoring an own goal after deflecting a Huddersfield shot. PHOTO: REUTERS

Emery wants wins, not clean sheets

LONDON • Unai Emery said he is not worried that Arsenal failed to keep a first away clean sheet of the season, as first-half goals from Alex Iwobi and Alexandre Lacazatte secured a 2-1 win at Premier League bottom side Huddersfield.

The result kept the Gunners in the thick of the chase for a top-four finish and Champions League football although questions remain about their defensive frailty.

Deep into injury time on Saturday, Adama Diakhaby broke clear on goal, lifted the ball over Bernd Leno and watched as Sead Kolasinac turned into his own goal via an unfortunate deflection.

Not that Emery was too concerned about that late blot on his team's performance.

"A clean sheet is important, but our main worry is to win," he said.

"The main thing is to score one more goal than them and, after that, it is to keep a clean sheet."

"Every player worked very well and the last action, unfortunately for us they scored and also maybe they deserved it."

Arsenal have won the joint most points in the final 10 minutes of matches this season, but relying heavily on second-half turn-arounds and late shows could only go on for so long.

At the heart of the problem is their defensive record – Arsenal remain the only Premier League team without an away clean sheet.

Emery had cut an increasingly animated and frustrated figure on the touchline as his team failed to kill off Huddersfield in the first period, even surviving a strong penalty appeal after Jason Puncheon's shot

struck the arm of Laurent Koscielny after 25 minutes.

"That is me," he said, explaining his antics. "It is my personality. If I am here, it is because in my career I progressed like that. If for one moment I thought it's negative, then I wouldn't do it."

The win moved Arsenal to within one point of fourth-placed Manchester United (51 points), even though Chelsea could regain fourth spot with a draw or win over champions Manchester City in their late match yesterday.

Insisting that a top-four finish was a realistic target, the Spaniard said: "I think it's difficult, but we can (finish in the top four). After 26 games, we are on our way and our motivation is very great and we've brought our target closer."

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Gareth Bale scoring Real Madrid's third goal past the despairing lunges of Jose Gimenez and goalkeeper Jan Oblak. The goal against Atletico Madrid on Saturday was his 100th for Real. PHOTO: REUTERS

Keep fighting, says Ramos after Real win derby to go 2nd

MADRID • Thibaut Courtois overcame the toy rat insults and Gareth Bale delivered a timely reminder of his talents with his 100th goal for Real Madrid in Saturday's feisty derby victory that reignited their LaLiga hopes.

The 3-1 over Atletico Madrid – their fifth straight league win – helped Los Blancos leapfrog their city rivals into second place for the first time since September.

They are on 45 points, five behind Barcelona, who played at Athletic Bilbao in the late game yesterday.

Real continued their revival under Santiago Solari in another impressive performance at the Wanda Metropolitano, aided by some fortunate decisions.

"LaLiga is there to fight for, there are a lot of points to win and any team can make your life hard," said Real captain Sergio Ramos.

"Winning the league motivates us, it's a really balanced competition and we have to keep fighting for it and make life difficult for Barcelona."

Bale had been left out of the starting line-up for the second time in four days, after he was also a substitute against the Catalans in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday.

He ended the hosts' hopes of a comeback on 74 minutes after Ramos' penalty put Real in front at half-time, with Antoine Griezmann earlier cancelling out Casemiro's acrobatic opener.

The Welshman's goal was not lost on Solari, even if his celebration drew criticism, after he appeared to make an insulting gesture towards the Atletico fans.

"It's great for Gareth," said the coach. "He was very happy and happy about his goal, which helped decide the game, because the game was alive and he finished it."

By the time Atletico's Thomas Partey was sent off with 10 minutes left, the game was up and Courtois could have been forgiven for breathing a sigh of relief at the final whistle. The Belgian, who spent three years at Atletico, was playing in the white of Real for the first time at the home of his former club.

He was whistled during the

warm-up and before kick-off, as the Atletico ultras behind the goal hurled dozens of toy rats towards his head. A sign read, "Thibaut – Rata", just to underline the point.

Alvaro Morata had gone the opposite way, also via Chelsea, after starting out at Real. He was cheered and, despite a quiet game, would have scored but for the video assistant referee (VAR) ruling out an impressive lob in the second half for offside.

The system was also involved in the penalty incident which saw Jose Gimenez dive in from behind on Real midfielder Vinicius.

The foul might have been outside the box, but the VAR disagreed.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Tue, 12 Feb 2019				
English Premier	Wolverhampton	Newcastle	4.00am	LW*
Spanish League	Alaves	Levante	4.00am	LW*

LW* : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only
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OLE AIMING FOR EUROPEAN GLORY

Interim boss believes Manchester United can take realistic shot at Champions League title

LONDON • Manchester United can ride their resurgence to mount a realistic challenge for the Champions League, said Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, who is edging closer to becoming the club's permanent manager.

United's remarkable upturn under the Norwegian, who arrived as interim boss in December, continued with a stylish 3-0 Premier League win on Saturday at Fulham – where his agent Jim Solbakken was alongside Ed Woodward, United's executive chairman, and Avram Glazer, one of the club's co-owners, in the directors' box.

United's next opponents are

Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League round of 16 tomorrow, and Solskjaer suggested United can not only overcome the Parisians but are also capable of going all the way in Europe's top club competition that they last won in 2008.

While the club are yet to close the door on other possibilities such as offering the post to Tottenham's Mauricio Pochettino, defeating PSG could make Solskjaer's case to replace Jose Mourinho on a full-time basis a stronger one.

"Anything's possible, definitely," said Solskjaer regarding the PSG tie. "We are performing well and, hope-

fully after this round, teams and supporters can talk about us as a challenger (for the Champions League). But he felt that talk of a United run for the English title was overblown, although the team could still have some influence over the eventual champions.

He said: "It's too far, the teams ahead. But we've got Liverpool, we've got City (still to play), so we might have a say in what's happening at the top of the table."

The 45-year-old, who has won 10 of his 11 games in charge while on loan from Molde and has taken United from sixth into fourth in the league, is being entrusted to influence United's long-term planning.

His belief in Phil Jones was a factor in the defender signing a contract extension and his playing prin-

PSG'S PLAN D AGAINST UNITED

We have lots of Plan Bs. Without Ney, maybe without Marco, maybe without Edi. We have a Plan D. It is super difficult... But we will be ready on Tuesday.

”

PSG COACH THOMAS TUCHEL, on dealing with the injuries to his key players.

ciples was an influence in the sale of the physical Marouane Fellaini.

But it is his immediate task that could determine his future, although he may be helped by an injury to Edinson Cavani, PSG's all-time leading scorer who has netted 22 times this season.

The talismanic Brazilian Neymar is not expected back from a metatarsal injury until early April.

Cavani appeared to hurt his leg while taking the penalty three minutes before half-time that gave the hosts a 1-0 Ligue 1 win over Bordeaux on Saturday. PSG suffered their first league defeat this term, a 2-1 loss at Lyon, the previous week.

Sports daily L'Equipe reported that a scan yesterday revealed a torn thigh muscle and suggested he may also miss the March 6 return

leg. Coach Thomas Tuchel admitted "the news will not be good" and he might need to resort to "Plan D".

He said: "It is too much. These are quality players for decisive matches. Not everyone can play at that level in the Champions League. We don't have a second Edi.

"We have lots of Plan Bs. Without Ney, maybe without Marco, maybe without Edi. We have a Plan D.

"It is super difficult... But we will be ready on Tuesday."

French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe could start as a lone striker at Old Trafford, supported by Julian Draxler and Angel di Maria, who spent one underwhelming season at United after signing for a then-British record £60 million (\$\$105 million). THE TIMES, LONDON, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe may spearhead the attack against Manchester United in the absence of other senior Paris Saint-Germain attackers like Neymar and Edinson Cavani because of injury. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

At Ajax, young stars stay with the club just long enough

AMSTERDAM • Last summer, seven of Ajax's brightest stars were summoned to a room at the Dutch club's training facility. Edwin van der Sar, the goalkeeper-turned-chief executive, and Marc Overmars, once a jet-heeled winger and now the Ajax sporting director, had a video to show them.

Its premise was simple. Each player was paired with an iconic figure from Ajax's illustrious history, one who shared a position, a nationality or (in one case) a bloodline:

- Goalkeeper Andre Onana had van der Sar.
- Forward Kasper Dolberg got Zlatan Ibrahimovic.
- Justin Kluivert was juxtaposed with his father, Patrick.
- Frenkie de Jong had Christian Eriksen.
- Matthijs de Ligt was compared to Barry Hulshoff, a defender from the all-conquering 1970s team.

The idea, van der Sar said, was to "show them how to become a legend at Ajax, and in Holland".

The film was designed to persuade the club's crown jewels, to resist the temptation to move to England, Spain or Italy for another year

or so, to "stay with each other, to win prizes and trophies here and then make the next step".

The tactic worked. Six of them should feature when they host Real Madrid in the last 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday. De Ligt will marshal the defence. De Jong will orchestrate the attacks.

Only one will be absent: Kluivert resisted the emotional overture to follow in his father's footsteps. He refused to extend his contract and was sold to Roma.

At Ajax, they understand why he made that decision – the allure, for a teenager with a famous name, of forging his own path. But, when they mention Kluivert now, it is with a hint of regret, a tinge of frustration. Not because he left, but because he left so soon.

"If a player goes after just half a year in the first team, like Kluivert, we are disappointed," said Said Ouaili, director of De Toekomst, Ajax's famed youth academy.

Last month, Ajax made another video. This time, it was for public consumption, posted on the club's social media channels. It was a little more than a minute long, but it showcased all of what Erik ten Hag, Ajax's manager, called de Jong's "special qualities". It was titled Frenkie Futuro and was released to celebrate the confirmation of the 21-year-old's move to Barcelona, set to be completed this summer.

De Jong is the shining light of the team, a player so promising that he has, more than once, been compared to Johan Cruyff himself.

Yet there was no regret at his departure. "Barcelona, enjoy the future, like we do," Ajax wrote on their official Twitter account.

Ten Hag might allow himself to wonder a little, he said, at what could happen if "I could keep them for two or three years", into their prime but that is it.

"I will be proud," he said. "The scouts who found them will be proud. Marc Overmars will be proud. Everyone will be."

This is what Ajax have always done. Since Cruyff himself left for Barcelona in 1973, they have churned out a stream of talent for others to enjoy: Johan Neeskens, Marco van Basten, Frank Rijkaard, Clarence Seedorf, Edgar Davids, the elder Kluivert, Wesley Sneijder, Rafael van der Vaart, Eriksen, Ibrahimovic, Jan Vertonghen, Luis Suarez.

The formula that has allowed it to do so hangs on the wall in ten Hag's office, opposite a series of black-and-white portraits of Rinus Michels, the mastermind of the great team of the 1970s; Cruyff, their star; and Louis van Gaal, the man who restored Ajax to the European pinnacle in the 1990s, with an almost entirely home-grown team.

Ten Hag laughs when he looks at that wall – "They set you a standard," he said, blowing out his cheeks. But he is serious when he discusses the Ajax way, a cross between a mission statement and a creed for the club.

These are the traits the club seek to instil in every player who wears their jersey, or who passes through De Toekomst, as well as their coaches and staff. There are 11 of them; this being Ajax, they are set out in a 4-3-3 formation. They range from taking responsibility and initiative to remaining disciplined and having fun.



Ajax midfielder Frenkie de Jong, who is moving to Barcelona this summer. For decades, Ajax have earned a reputation for churning out youth players tipped for global fame, and then letting them go to bigger clubs. PHOTO: NYTIMES

THE AJAX WAY

We focus always on the individual. We don't think about age groups, like the Dutch federation or like other clubs.



SAID OUAALI, director of De Toekomst, the Ajax academy.



Singapore Slingers' John Fields being challenged by Saigon Heat players in their Asean Basketball League game at the OCBC Arena yesterday. The American scored 16 points in the Slingers' 76-70 win. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

SLINGERS SURVIVE HEAT SCARE

Tale of two halves for Neo's men as they fend off Saigon's relentless pressure to win 76-70

Xener Gill

The Singapore Slingers will do well to shed their Jekyll-and-Hyde performances and be more consistent if they want to make it to the Asean Basketball League (ABL) play-offs. Too often in games this season, they have either opened up big leads only to throw it away at the end, or start slow and play catch-up later on. Yesterday, it was a case of the former as Slingers coach Neo Beng

Siang cut a frustrating figure on the touchline during the "nightmare" second half of the ABL match against the Saigon Heat at the OCBC Arena. Leading by 23 points at half-time, the Slingers almost threw it away in the second half before Neo called a timeout with four minutes left in the fourth quarter to galvanise his troops, who then pulled themselves together to close out a 76-70 victory. "The second half was a nightmare for us because we weren't playing together as a team. We

were trying to push through every shot and that basically killed us on offence," said Neo. "We had a 23-point lead at half-time so I emphasised that they have to find the same energy and effort because our offence was not doing well and we lacked that on the defensive end, too." Sharp shooting and dynamic players saw the Slingers burst out of the blocks to lead 24-19 after the first quarter before holding the Heat to a mere five points in the second as they took a commanding 47-24 lead into half-time. But it all went awry for the Singapore side in the second half as the players misplaced passes and kept slipping all over the court. Instead

of playing as a team, they were each trying to score on their own. The Heat limited the Slingers to just 13 points in the third quarter as they reduced the deficit to 60-45. The Vietnamese outfit continued to pile on the pressure in the last quarter and, at one point, they trailed by only seven points at 69-62. It was Neo's timely intervention which saw the Slingers get their act together and hold on for the win. Slingers guard Jerran Young top-scored with 21 points, while his fellow American imports John Fields and Xavier Alexander contributed 16 and 15 points respectively. Forward Delvin Goh also had a strong game for the Slingers, scor-

ing 12 points – 10 in the first half – and pulling down 13 rebounds. He said: "I think we came out with the mindset to win this game so the effort was really there. "For the next game, we want to do the same." With the win, the Slingers leapfrogged the Heat into third place in the 10-team ABL standings. Their next game is against Malaysia Dragons on Feb 22 in Kuala Lumpur. Neo said: "We definitely want the win, but we have to take care of our own business by playing good defence, running the floor and playing together as a team."

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ALL GONE WRONG

The second half was a nightmare for us because we weren't playing together as a team. We were trying to push through every shot and that... killed us on offence.



NEO BEN SIANG Slingers coach, on how his team nearly threw the game away with a dismal second-half display.

Rising MMA star holds off veteran

MELBOURNE • Australian middleweight champion Robert Whittaker failed to make the main event after emergency hernia surgery just hours before UFC 234. But the home fans among the 15,238 crowd at the Rod Laver Arena would have little complaints after watching rising mixed martial arts star Israel Adesanya, a Nigerian-born New Zealander, beat former middleweight champion Anderson Silva in a wild three-round brawl yesterday. The match that was upgraded to the main event started with Adesanya, 29, landing some heavy shots on the 43-year-old Brazilian challenger. "The first round was like a gongfu movie," said Dana White, president of the Ultimate Fighting Championship later. By round two, though, Silva began to mount a more effective of-

fence and it quickly turned into a wild back-and-forth battle with both fighters using a range of unorthodox techniques, including high kicks and spinning attacks. But, in the end, Adesanya's ability to control the distance was enough to earn him a unanimous decision from the judges (29-28, 30-27, 30-27). Said White: "He (Silva) is a crafty veteran... he has knockout power and, if it goes to the ground, he is a black belt in jiu-jitsu and has submitted a lot of guys." "Israel went in with a sold-out house, a lot of pressure on him... and he did a good job. It was a fun fight to watch with two guys who are incredibly talented." It was no fun at all for Whittaker, who weighed in for the 185lb (84kg) bout against American contender Kelvin Gastelum with no problems on Saturday but, around



Israel Adesanya throwing a punch at Anderson Silva in their fight, which he won by unanimous decision. PHOTO: TWITTER/ UFC

10pm, he began vomiting and experiencing severe abdominal pain. At about 2am yesterday morning, scans at the hospital revealed the fighter would need emergency surgery for a hernia. This is the second time he has had to pull out of a title bout on home soil after also missing last year's clash in Perth against Cuba's Yoel Romero. His scheduled opponent took to social media to offer his sympathy. Gastelum tweeted: "I'm sorry to everyone that was expecting this

great fight, family, friends and followers from around the world. "I wish @robwhittakermma a speedy recovery champ!" The UFC said in a statement that customers may request a full refund owing to the change in the main event. The co-main event was the lightweight match-up that saw the crafty American action hero Lando Vannata defeat surging Brazilian Marcos Mariano in the first round, locking up a kimura submission after securing top position. XINHUA

Vonn signs off with bronze in swansong

ARE (SWEDEN) • Lindsey Vonn's body may have told her it was time to quit skiing, but the American said it was her heart that won her a final medal of her career as she took bronze in the women's downhill at the World Championships in Are, Sweden yesterday. The 34-year-old, who is the most successful female skier ever, announced earlier in the week that she would quit the sport after yesterday's race, and she rolled back the clock to give the crowd something to remember her by. "It was such an emotional day for me – it was really hard to control my nerves," Vonn said following the

race, which was won by Slovenia's Ilka Stuhec, with Corinne Suter of Switzerland claiming silver. "I was definitely the most nervous I've been in my entire life, and all I wanted to do was finish strong and have the ending that I've been dreaming of for my career." Aside from the medal, the highlight for Vonn was being greeted by Swedish skiing great Ingemar Stenmark, who presented her with a bouquet of flowers after her final run and whose record of 86 World Cup victories she spent her career chasing. "He's a man of few words, but he said I skied great, and those are spe-

cial words coming from someone who has won a total of three Olympic and eight World Championship medals," Vonn said. Her hopes of a successful swansong had been hampered by a knee injury which forced her to call an abrupt halt to what should have been her farewell tour of the ski circuit. "It's (like) a gold medal for me, no one can take it away, I skied my heart out," she said. "I'm barely making it through with my body the way it is, but I think I skied with all heart today, and that's what willed me down to get a medal." REUTERS

SportsWorld

Napoli draw, Juve have chance to lead by 11pts

MILAN • Napoli could finish the weekend trailing Serie A leaders Juventus by 11 points after Carlo Ancelotti's wasteful side stuttered to a 0-0 draw at Fiorentina on Saturday. Napoli failed to score away from home for the third game running, meaning Juventus could stretch their advantage to double digits if they beat mid-table Sassuolo earlier this morning. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Law and Boutier proud victors in Vic Open

GEELONG (Australia) • David Law of Scotland nailed an eagle on the last hole to win his first European Tour title yesterday, as France's Celine Boutier clinched her maiden LPGA Tour crown at the Vic Open. Law, 27, carded a six-under 66 for a 270 total, one ahead of locals Wade Ormsby (70) and Brad Kennedy (67). Boutier shot a 72 for 281 and a two-shot win over a trio of players. The pioneering event is the only one in the world with male and female fields. REUTERS

Wales going for 12th straight rugby win

ROME • Wales overpowered Italy 26-15 in the Six Nations on Saturday, notching up a record-equalling 11th straight victory, the first such Welsh winning streak in a century. They dominated possession

but scored only two tries in a performance that is unlikely to worry their next opponents England. In another match, Ireland got their Six Nations campaign back on track with a pulsating 22-13 victory over Scotland. REUTERS

Jamaican runner in ICU after collapsing in 3k

NEW YORK • Jamaican distance runner Kemoy Campbell was taken to hospital on Saturday, after he collapsed and stopped breathing during the 3,000m at the Millrose Games. The 28-year-old was acting as the pacesetter during the sixth lap when he fell off the banked track into the infield near the ongoing men's shot put competition. Sports Illustrated reported that he was breathing with assistance and will remain in an intensive care unit. THE GUARDIAN

Huge score earns Uno Four Continents crown

ANAHEIM (California) • Olympic silver medalist Shoma Uno won the men's title at the Four Continents Figure Skating Championships on Saturday with the highest-scoring free skate of the season. The Japanese, fourth after the short programme, nailed three quadruple jumps in an assured free skate to a Beethoven piece that earned 197.36 points, his total of 289.12 putting him 15.61 points ahead of Jin Boyang of China. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SPORT

GEORGE
STEALS
HARDEN'S
THUNDER

He scores game-high 45pts to help Oklahoma overcome massive deficit to beat the Rockets

9

Consecutive triple-doubles Russell Westbrook has notched.

HOUSTON • Paul George outgunned James Harden in a match-up of Most Valuable Player candidates, and his Oklahoma City Thunder also came out on top – erasing a 26-point deficit to beat hosts Houston Rockets 117-112.

George finished with a game-high 45 points plus 11 rebounds, torching Houston with six three-pointers plus 15 of 18 free throws on Saturday.

“I look forward to playing against the best, and I look forward to being guarded by the best,” said George who has averaged 35.4 points in his last 10 National Basketball Association games.

“I have fun with the game. That’s what the game is about.”

His four free throws inside the final four seconds sealed the win after Russell Westbrook slipped through the defence to convert a lay-up and give them the lead for good at 113-112 with 26.9sec left.

Harden had 42 points, his 29th consecutive game with at least 30, but he missed a contested three-pointer after Westbrook pushed the Thunder ahead.

Chris Paul added 18 points and nearly had a triple-double (10 rebounds, nine assists) in his strongest performance since his return from a hamstring injury.

Harden refused to make excuses despite getting hit “pretty hard” in the first quarter, according to coach Mike D’Antoni. He was carrying a shoulder knock after contact with the 110kg centre Steven Adams.

“I just got caught up with Adams,”



Houston Rockets guard James Harden attempting to block a shot by Oklahoma City Thunder forward and fellow MVP candidate Paul George. PHOTO: REUTERS

he said. “He’s a pretty strong guy. “I’m not going to make excuses, They played well.”

Westbrook, usually the Thunder’s main man, backed up George’s performance by matching an NBA record set by Wilt Chamberlain with his ninth consecutive triple-double: 21 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists.

George said: “We got to stop with the narrative about Russ not doing well, Russ not having a good night.

He’s doing everything.”

Two runs sparked the Rockets’ spurt to their 26-point lead in the first half. The first was an 11-0 run that bridged the opening two quarters and they led 36-25.

At 58-42, they landed what appeared to be a devastating blow. They had a 10-0 run that included three-pointers from Paul and Harden plus three Harden free throws after Paul converted a technical assessed against George for

protesting a call.

The Rockets were 12 of 24 from deep late in the first half before missing five consecutive three-pointers, leaving the door ajar for a comeback.

The Thunder matched their hosts’ 42-point second quarter with a 42 in the third, keyed by seven-for-12 three-point shooting. They also posted a 53-39 edge on the glass.

After committing just two

turnovers in the first half, the Rockets had six in the third quarter and collapsed with one-for-nine shooting from behind the arc.

Still, they led 86-79 before Thunder guard Dennis Schroder closed the frame with 11 straight points to pull the team even at 90-all entering the fourth.

Less than three minutes into the final frame, the Thunder led 98-92, and the Rockets were left scrambling. REUTERS

No ulterior motive in All-Star team selections: James

PHILADELPHIA • LeBron James understands how much fans love talking about players changing teams, but said that his All-Star team selections had no ulterior motive.

“That’s a great conversation. Everyone kind of gets up for fantasy basketball talk,” he said on Saturday ahead of yesterday’s National Basketball Association game in Philadelphia. “Guys that are restricted free agents, that are free agents, I don’t know, player options. That’s

all part of the speculation that continues to drive our sport.

“It’s all good and well and dandy but I picked according to my draft board and I picked according to who was the best available.”

He got to chose ahead of Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo, the other top All-Star vote-getter and captain.

He chose first and took the Golden State Warriors’ Kevin Durant. He also selected the Boston

Celtics’ Kyrie Irving and the New Orleans Pelicans’ Anthony Davis, along with James Harden of the Houston Rockets and Kawhi Leonard of the Toronto Raptors.

“It just so happened that I had KD who’s a pending free agent, and Kyrie who’s a pending free agent,” James said. “James (Harden) is under contract until 2030. Kawhi’s a free agent.”

James was reminded that Davis, who requested for a trade and has

been linked to the Los Angeles Lakers, is under contract.

“Yeah, he’s under contract,” he said. “Bradley Beal’s under contract, Karl-Anthony Towns is under contract. Klay (Thompson) is a free agent. Who else is on my team? LaMarcus (Aldridge) is under contract. Dwyane (Wade) is jobless. And I’m under contract.” His playful dig at Wade came with a smile.

Davis, meanwhile, played his second straight game after the Feb 7

trade deadline and after three weeks out, following his finger injury and public transfer demand.

The fact that the 25-year-old is playing at all might be due to the NBA’s intervention. The league office informed the team on Friday that he would be expected to play, per the rule against teams resting healthy players, according to ESPN’s Brian Windhorst.

There was talk that the team might bench the big man for the fi-

nal 27 games of the season, both to protect his trade value and to angle towards a better draft slot. The report said he would have his minutes reduced and sit out one game during back-to-back games.

But, on Saturday, he played 34 minutes and had 14 points in a 99-90 loss at the Memphis Grizzlies, a day after scoring 32 points in 25 minutes in a 122-117 home win over the Minnesota Timberwolves. DPA, REUTERS

Casey hopes 3-shot lead enough to hold off Lefty

PEBBLE BEACH (California) • Paul Casey had six birdies in a five-under 67 at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am for a three-shot, 54-hole lead he hopes will be enough to prevent Phil Mickelson from winning the storied tournament a fifth time.

Teeing off as part of a four-way tie for the lead, Casey jumped clear after his effort at Spyglass Hill gave him a 200 total on Saturday.

He ended a nine-year drought on the PGA Tour when he won the Valspar Championship last March, holding off Tiger Woods and Patrick Reed by a stroke.

The Englishman told Golf Channel: “I want to give myself as many opportunities (to win) as I can this season and I’ve already given myself one this week. I’m enjoying it.”

Left-hander Mickelson carded 70 at host course Pebble Beach for a 203 total, within striking distance

of matching Mark O’Meara’s record five wins. Lucas Glover (70) and Scott Piercy (69) were a stroke further back. South Korean Choi Ho-sung, whose fisherman swing has made him a social media sensation, failed to make the cut after managing only 224 (72-75-77).

Strong winds and an occasional rain squall made for testing conditions on Saturday, and Casey acknowledged that the weather created an element of luck. He said: “You can’t control the weather. You just have to cross your fingers and hope you’re at the right part of the course at the right time.”

The gallery would also be a factor. With everyone having played all three courses, the field will come together at Pebble Beach, where Mickelson will no doubt be the fan favourite.

Thirteen of his 43 Tour victories



Paul Casey at the 12th tee in the third round of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. He is leading on 15 under. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

have come in his native California, and another would match the number his long-time rival Woods has recorded in the Golden State.

Mickelson battled with two straight bogeys on the exposed coastal stretch around the turn, but turned it around with a brilliant eagle at the par-five 14th.

“The drive on 14 was a ‘hellacious’ bomb. That thing was way out

there,” the five-time Major winner said with pride of the 330-yard drive. “I can rarely reach that hole ever (in two) and I had a four-iron in, so that thing was pretty nasty.”

His second shot landed some 12 feet in front of the hole and might have rolled in if not for the damp conditions that caused his ball to screech quickly to a halt three feet short. REUTERS

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

FOOTBALL

English Premier League Wolves v Newcastle (Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, tomorrow, 4am).

Spanish LaLiga Alaves v Levante (StarHub Ch213, tomorrow, 3.55am).

TENNIS

ATP Rotterdam Open Day 1: Session 1 (7.30pm) & 2 (tomorrow, 2.30am) – StarHub Ch201.

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

Uefa Champions League Last 16, 1st leg: Man United v PSG (Singtel TV Ch110 & StarHub Ch214), Roma v Porto (Ch112 & Ch213) – Wednesday, 3.55am.

Uefa Europa League Last 32, 1st leg: Fenerbahce v Zenit (Ch110 & Ch214, Wednesday, 1.50am).

TENNIS

ATP Rotterdam Open Day 2: Session 1 (6pm) & 2 (Wednesday, 2.30am) – StarHub Ch201.

For latest updates, go to singtel.tv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D **DEPTH OF FEELING**
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her love life for
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Symptoms of parental burnout include emotional and physical exhaustion, as well as a sense that one is an incompetent parent.
PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Are you a burnt-out parent?

While caring for one's offspring, it is just as important to look after one's well-being, say health experts



Joyce Teo

Parents want the best for their children, but sometimes, they end up creating undue stress for themselves and their offspring.

Many parents in Singapore prioritise the pursuit of academic excellence and often neglect themselves in the process of helping their kids achieve this goal.

Stress levels can run high as a result and, in some cases, work or marriages may suffer.

Some parents may even end up distancing themselves emotionally from their kids.

This is a sign of parental burnout, a syndrome that three in 20, or up to 14 per cent of parents, are at risk of, according to a Belgian study last year.

Other key symptoms of parental burnout are emotional and physical exhaustion and a sense of incompetence as a parent.

"Parental burnout is not an entity commonly discussed or recognised. It's only in the last few years that research has emerged from Europe to characterise this syndrome," said Dr Julian Hong of DTAP Clinic.

"Today's parents carry varied responsibilities, each competing for their time and energy."

Decades ago, parents likely had it easier and simply made sure their kids were fed, safe and not causing trouble, said Ms Cheryl Ong, a senior psychologist in the child development unit at National University Hospital.

With the myriad research on early childhood development and associated outcomes in adulthood, parents now have the added responsibility to care for the emotional health of their children, she added.

However, parents need to navigate conflicting theories about what the "best" practices are and, often, theories do not align with real life, said Ms Ong.

"In addition, in today's dual-income, multi-generational households, some parents face the stress of dealing with conflicting parenting values between husband and wife, as well as with concerned grandparents who vocalise how they have done things differently."

If a child has an easy temperament and turns out "well", parents may still be able to cope with these stressors, she said.

"But in cases where children have

negative temperaments and face difficulties, and when life throws a curve ball in other ways, the stress can prove too much to bear."

Some parents also face a sense of conflict, as they juggle parenting and their responsibilities towards the rest of the family as well as other commitments such as friends and work.

Dr Chua Siew Eng, a specialist in psychiatry and consultant at Raffles Counselling Centre, said "some parents feel torn between the child and other commitments and this sense of conflict can increase stress".

SANDWICH GENERATION

Today's parents may belong to the "sandwich generation", as they have to care for young children as well as ageing parents, Dr Chua said.

There are emerging studies on the "sandwich generation" that highlight multiple contemporary changes relevant to Singapore and other countries, she pointed out.

These include a rapidly greying society, rising costs of living and healthcare, reduced fertility rates, older first-time parenthood, increasing divorce rates and single parenthood, and children remaining home longer before "flying the nest".

All this means that the caregivers' load is getting heavier and this can raise the risk of anxiety and depression, which are top contributors to global disease burden, said Dr Chua.

She said the parents who have approached her for help do so typically because their child is depressed or anxious, or both.

The main stressors are usually related to the child (be it about their health, peer integration or studies), their marriage or work, caring for ageing elders, as well as the challenge of balancing all these priorities.

HIGHER STRESS FOR SOME PARENTS

Even for parents whose kids are well, they face tremendous stress through each of their children's life stages.

This stress is escalated when a child falls sick, has a learning difficulty or a chronic illness, said Dr Hong, who was one of the moderators at the Singapore Mental Health Conference held at the end of last month.

A robust medical review last year, which summarised the findings from 133 research studies on parental stress, showed that stress levels were higher for parents of children with autism spectrum disorder and learning disabilities.

The findings document the association between parenting stress and child behavioural problems and highlight the importance of assessing parenting stress as part of routine care and behavioural intervention programmes, he pointed out.

Dr Hong said: "We often tell parents that they first need to look after themselves before they are

able to look after their families or children."

Otherwise, emotional and physical exhaustion may cause some parents to distance themselves from their children, he cautioned.

Ms Ong said: "Parents would rather spend their scarce time, money and resources on their children, not realising that being well themselves is one of the best things they can do for their kids."

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Parents would rather spend their scarce time, money and resources on their children, not realising that being well themselves is one of the best things they can do for their kids.



MSCHERYL ONG, a senior psychologist in the child development unit at National University Hospital on the importance of parents' well-being

**MORE
STORIES ON D2**

Swallow a pill, track your health

A digital capsule will alert patients and their doctors should they forget to take their medication

WASHINGTON • When his chemotherapy patients leave the hospital to continue treatment at home, Dr Edward Greeno faces a new challenge.

He can no longer ensure they are taking their medicine.

Dr Greeno, medical director of the Masonic Cancer Clinic at the University of Minnesota, has come to realise that some patients, like children hiding naughty behaviour from a parent, will fudge the truth to avoid his disapproval, even when their health is at risk.

To combat patients' fibbing and forgetfulness, Dr Greeno has begun deploying a new tool in recent months: a pill embedded with a tiny, ingestible sensor.

The sensor transmits data from inside a patient's body to a wear-

able patch placed on his abdomen, which then connects to a mobile app that patients and doctors can access.

That data offers a new window into patients' health and behaviour, Dr Greeno said, allowing doctors to remotely monitor someone's heart rate, activity level and sleep cycle.

The sensor, which is about the size of a grain of sand and dissolves in the gastrointestinal tract, also tells doctors when a patient has taken his medication.

The information is compiled in a database that doctors can access from their devices.

At the Masonic Cancer Clinic, as part of a pilot programme, doctors have begun pairing the sensor – made by a California company called Proteus Digital Health – with a common chemotherapy drug used to treat stage three and four colorectal cancer patients.

“When we give people chemotherapy in the clinic with an intravenous drug, we're able to assess

the dose and timing and make sure they're well enough to continue getting the treatment,” Dr Greeno said. “But when you send them home with a bottle of pills, you don't know when they're taking them or if they're well enough to take them.”

“You'd think for cancer treatment that patients would be pretty diligent. That's not always the case, for a variety of reasons,” he added.

Ingestible technology has raised a variety of concerns – from how physicians will use the wave of new data created by the technology to whether that data may be vulnerable to hackers – among experts and ethicists since the Food and Drug Administration approved digital pills in 2017.

“The health industry is behind the curve when it comes to cyber security,” Mr Jason Christopher, chief technology officer at cyber security company Axio, told Forbes last year. “Forget health record databases. How do you patch a digital pill?”

Despite the concerns, many experts have pointed out that the technology will help doctors ensure patients are taking their prescribed medication.

Not taking medicine – or “medication non-adherence” in the health-care world – is a “common and costly problem”, according to a study cited by the National Centre for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

“Approximately 30 to 50 per cent of American adults are not adhering to long-term medications, leading to an estimated US\$100 billion in preventable costs annually,” according to the 2013 study.

Comparing medication non-adherence to weight loss, NCBI researchers say the problem is more complex than it might seem and often has multiple complicating factors.

Dr Greeno agreed, pointing out that his patients are not always lying about their behaviour.

Sometimes, older patients have

trouble opening pill bottles.

Other times, he said, they are so fatigued and foggy that they struggle to adhere to a rigorous schedule that requires them to ingest multiple pills each day. And sometimes, he said, they struggle to deal with a medication's side effects.

The problem, Dr Greeno said, is that chemotherapy drugs can have a narrow therapeutic window and often cost between US\$10,000 (\$\$13,600) and US\$20,000 a month.

“I had one patient whose hands hurt and she couldn't open her pill bottle,” Dr Greeno said, noting that when the patient's daughter was around, she would take her pills, but when her daughter was gone, she would not.

“Usually, I might not find out about it until weeks later, when she comes to the clinic.

“But now, the app is telling me in real time that she didn't take her pills and I get that message in the clinic the next morning.”

WASHINGTON POST

FROM D1

Five time-out mistakes

When children misbehave, parents often get mad. They may scream, shout or spank them.

Others may ask their children to sit in a corner for a while. This strategy, known as time out, is the deliberate removal of adult attention as a consequence for a misbehaviour, said Ms Cheryl Ong, a senior psychologist at the child development unit at National University Hospital.

It is most appropriate for children aged three to 12, she said. Time out interrupts the inappropriate behaviour, removes attention from the child and gives everyone involved a chance to calm down. It also models respectful behaviour.

It sounds effective, but some parents struggle with it and end up more stressed than before. Ms Ong points out five mistakes that parents often make when using time out.

1

CALLING IT THE NAUGHTY CHAIR

Choose a corner or a chair in a safe and quiet room for time out. But do not label it negatively, for instance, calling it the naughty chair or corner, as it may backfire. Children may thus resist time out even more because it has an impact on the way they perceive themselves.

Emphasise to your child that one of the goals of time out is for him to learn to calm down.

2

SURPRISE, IT'S TIME OUT

When your child is calm, tell him that time out will be used as a consequence for specific sets of behaviour, such as refusal to follow the rules.

Describe where the time out will be and how long it will last. Then, practise doing it with your child.

3

FORGETTING TO KEEP TIME

The optimal duration for time out is the child's age in minutes, up to five minutes, from the time the child has calmed down. Research has shown that five minutes is as effective as longer periods of time.

4

SCOLDING OR STARING AT YOUR CHILD DURING TIME OUT

Children will often protest against time out by screaming, banging or throwing things and parents usually find it hard to ignore such behaviour.

However, they should avoid talking to or looking at the child during time out.

The child is simply testing whether his parents will enforce time out. After some time, he will learn to calm down more quickly during time out.

5

HAVING NO BACK-UP PLAN

What you can do is identify a chair in a quiet room or corner for time out. Children should then be told that a room will be used as a back-up if they get out of the chair more than once.

When the child resists sitting in the chair, tell him: “If you don't sit in the time-out chair to calm down, you will have to go to the time-out room.”

For younger children, parents may need to walk them to the time-out spot.



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Two alternatives to time out

Using natural or logical consequences

For example, if the child does not follow the time limit set by his parents for watching television, the logical consequence can be that he loses his television time the next day.

Also, if the child is using a pair of scissors to cut something he is not supposed to, simply remove the pair of scissors and disallow him using it on his own.

Removing privileges

For example, if an older child refuses to practise time out, you can prolong the time-out period by a minute.

For the final warning, he can be told that if he still does not do it, he will lose his television privileges for the week.

Six ways to cope with stress

Parenting is invariably stressful. To minimise the strain, parents need to recognise, prevent and manage the causes of emotional pain, said experts.

1

ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRESSORS OF PARENTING

Ms Cheryl Ong, a senior psychologist at the child development unit at National University Hospital, said stressful situations can be a good opportunity for parents to show their child it is okay to acknowledge negative emotions and show how to deal with them.

For instance, a parent can say: “Mummy is feeling stressed because I don't know what to do with you right now. I'm going to walk away and calm down first.”

2

BUILD A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD

It is difficult to deal with the daily grind of parenting when a relationship is fraught. Instead, take time to play and enjoy each other's company, said Ms Ong.

Praise your child and look for his personal strengths. Accept him for who he is. Understand what is expected at his stage of development, moderate your expectations and have faith that he will grow up.

3

SET ROUTINES AND RULES

Parenting becomes more stressful when children do not know what to expect and are dependent on their parents for what to do all the time, said Ms Ong.

Morning and sleep routines and rules are ways to provide structure, thus reducing the need for repeated verbal instructions, she said.

Limit the number of rules to only the most important ones so that you can be consistent.

4

GET HELP

It is normal and healthy for parents to have time for themselves. This makes it necessary to form support systems to help with the children. This is especially important in homes where there is one main caregiver and when children are young and have greater needs, said Ms Ong.

Having someone you can trust to take over at times is essential, be it a spouse, grandparent, friend, school teacher or caregiver.

Parents also underestimate how the state of their marital relationship affects their children, she said.

“Children are typically the top source of stress in a marital relationship and taking time to work on that benefits the child's emotional health as well.”

Dr Chua Siew Eng, a specialist in psychiatry and consultant at Raffles Counselling Centre, said parents should also communicate clearly and consistently with family members to preserve harmony in the family.

5

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Prioritise your health by maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and cutting down on alcohol intake and smoking, said Dr Chua.

Make time to unwind by doing something that you enjoy or take up a hobby, she said.

When parenting stress gets too much to bear, talk to someone about it.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to speak to a mental health professional, such as a counsellor in a family service centre or a psychiatrist, said Ms Ong.

6

LEARN ALONG THE WAY AND DON'T COMPARE

“When in doubt, do online searches, ask the experts and find out everything you need to know,” said DTAP Clinic's Dr Julian Hong.

He added that parents with more than one child tend to compare one child with the other, which may then lead to more complaints.

Social media can also create a lot of pressure as parents are tempted to compare their children with other kids. Instead, parents can encourage one another and exchange tips on best practices.

Joyce Teo

Fit&Fab



As work at a law firm is fast-paced, lawyer Joel Lim says exercise helps keep him sane and gives him time alone to recharge. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Courting good food and exercise

Lawyer Joel Lim exercises often so that he can indulge in his favourite foods such as roti prata, bak chor mee and kway chap

Joey Teo

What is your secret to looking fabulous?
Drinking lots of water to stay hydrated. I hate feeling thirsty, so I drink anywhere from four to eight litres of water a day.

Has there ever been a time when you were not fit and fab?
Yes, and ironically, it was during national service (NS) when men should be getting fitter and stronger. I was posted overseas to an air force base in San Diego, California, in the United States for most of my NS stint. After moving there, my exercise routine was disrupted and, once I had fallen off the track, the inertia to restart and get going was just too great.
It also did not help that there was a wide variety of (junk) food conveniently available there.

What is your diet like?
During the week, I generally have a clean diet. I will have fruit for breakfast and lunch is usually the heaviest meal of the day, but nothing too crazy.
Dinners are often home-cooked affairs with the family, where I try not to have any carbohydrates.
These rules do not apply once the weekend hits. I am a huge foodie and, as sinful as they may be, I really love local hawker fare.
What are your indulgences?
I usually spend Saturday or Sunday mornings driving to obscure parts of the island or travelling to neighbouring countries to find the best roti prata, bak chor mee or kway chap.
I think I exercise as often as I do so I can afford to eat any of these three dishes or all of them. And by all, I mean all three different dishes in one sitting.
I also like to experiment cooking

new dishes and have friends over for meals most weekends, so a large amount of time is spent in the kitchen, which does not help my diet. And good food never tastes worse with good wine – another of my guilty pleasures.
How important is it for you to keep up with your fitness routine?
Exercise plays a huge role in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
Work at a law firm is fast-paced and there are definitely occasions where stress levels are high.
Exercise keeps me sane and also gives me some time alone to recharge. It helps even more when I am able to squeeze in some exercise before work as it keeps me focused the rest of the day.
On days when I have to work late, taking an hour off to exercise in the evening breaks the pace of work and clears my head so that I can keep going late into the night.

How do you maintain a healthy work-life balance?
My job, as well as teaching at fitness studio Boom, leaves me with little free time. If I want to stay fit and make my health a priority, I realised I needed to make some sacrifices and, more importantly, have a better organised schedule.
As my hours at the law firm are not always predictable, I try to get everything done as early as possible or get a lot done earlier in the week to avoid procrastinating.
What is your favourite and least favourite part of your body?
I guess it is the brain. All of us will eventually get old and frail, but my late grandfather often belaboured the point that nothing beats keeping an active mind.
What are your must-dos before and after a workout?
I am not sure whether this is

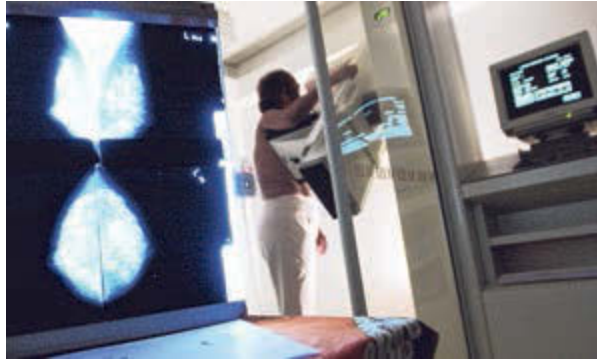
because I am getting older, but I find that I really have to make sure I get something to eat before and after every workout. The gastric pains are getting worse.
Also, I know I should stretch more often, but sometimes, I am a little too lazy for that.
What are the three most important things in your life?
Family, friends and food – preferably always altogether.
How has your lifestyle influenced your family and friends?
My parents, who run their own educational resource business, and my two siblings have always been very active.
Although we do not necessarily have the same fitness interests, each of us makes it a point to put in some time to exercise every week. This may involve walking, swimming or a Pilates session.

I guess teaching at Boom may have also influenced my friends and family. Some of my peers now attend my classes and my younger sister is training to become an instructor at Boom.
How extensive is your collection of sports-related paraphernalia?
I know most people would laugh, but I love the fit-wear from Lululemon. Nearly all my workout gear comes from it.
Would you go for plastic surgery?
I have nothing against it, but, no, I would not.
Do you think you are sexy?
I do not think anyone who has accompanied me on any of my weekend binge-eating expeditions would think so.
joyceteo@sph.com.sg

Breast cancer ‘calculator’ may help predict risk

LONDON • Women may be able to go to their general practitioners (GPs) to find out their risk of getting breast cancer and choose whether or not to be screened, if a new online calculator devised by scientists is successful.
Cancer Research UK scientists have worked out a way to assess women’s chances of developing the disease on the basis of both genetic data and lifestyle risks.
They hope to offer a reasonably good prediction by combining information on family history and genetics with other factors such as weight, age at menopause, alcohol consumption and use of hormone replacement therapy.
Many lifestyle risk factors for breast cancer are known, but each one individually often does not add up to much. The cumulative effect, however, may be much more significant. The same applies to genes.
Two inherited genes – BRCA1 and BRCA2 – give women an increased chance of breast cancer.
But there are many other genes that are now thought to play a small part. The researchers, for their risk assessment, have taken into account 300 different genes that

could be identified.
Professor Antonis Antoniou, lead author of the research at the University of Cambridge, said: “This is the first time that anyone has combined so many elements into one breast cancer prediction tool.
“It could be a game-changer for breast cancer because now we can identify large numbers of women with different levels of risk – not just women who are at high risk.
“This should help doctors to tailor the care they provide depending on their patients’ level of risk.
“For example, some women may need additional appointments with their doctor to discuss screening or prevention options and others may just need advice on their lifestyle and diet.
“We hope this means more people can be diagnosed early and survive their disease for longer, but more research and trials are needed before we will fully understand how this could be used.”
The researchers, who have published a paper in the journal Genetics in Medicine, have been hoping that a few GP practices would try out the risk assessment tool later this year.



A large proportion of the 55,000 breast cancer cases diagnosed each year in Britain’s National Health Service have been in women at increased risk of the disease.
If the calculator works well, it could lead to more of those at risk being identified early, when they could be successfully treated. It would also mean that breast-cancer screening, through mammograms, could be more accurately targeted.
At present, not all women want to be screened because of the risk of being wrongly diagnosed with cancer. The calculator may help them make a more informed decision.
THE GUARDIAN

A posed photo of a patient undergoing a mammogram. Scientists have devised a new online calculator which they hope can combine information on family history and genetics with factors such as weight to predict a woman’s risk of breast cancer.
PHOTO: ST FILE

Fitness routine

Monday	• 1 – 1½hr strength training
Tuesday	• Teach two 1hr classes
Wednesday	• Teach one 1hr class
Thursday	• 2hr tennis session
Friday	• Rest or 1 – 1½hr high intensity interval training session
Saturday	• Teach one 1hr class or rest
Sunday	• 1hr hot yoga

Source: JOEL LIM
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

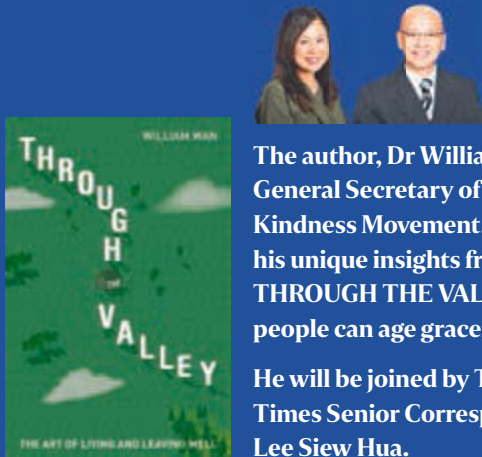
BioBox

JOEL LIM

AGE: 29
HEIGHT: 1.79m
WEIGHT: 77kg

Mr Lim exercises a lot so that he can eat as much hawker fare as he wants at the end of the week.
It helps that he has always been active, having been introduced to fitness early in life.
When he was a national swimmer, he would juggle schoolwork with up to 11 training sessions a week.
Today, even though his work keeps him busy, he works out regularly and finds time to teach a few classes a week at fitness studio Boom.
“Teaching at Boom has been extremely invigorating,” says the bachelor, who is a lawyer at Dentons Rodyk & Davidson.
“I have realised that I am helping, not only myself, but others as well as they work towards a fitter, stronger and better version of themselves.”
He adds: “Seeing some of the regular patrons at Boom grow over the course of the year has been very rewarding and that has motivated me to continue teaching despite my hectic schedule at work.”

Celebrate the Art of Living and Leaving Well



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He will be joined by The Straits Times Senior Correspondent Lee Siew Hua.



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Turn a *negative* into a *positive*

By ARUL JOHN

Facing negativity in the workplace is commonplace. But allowing it to influence your life can leave you unproductive, unmotivated and unsuccessful.

There are several ways to transform this negative energy into a positive one that will motivate and help you live a successful and productive life.

Take responsibility

In a fix but you are not to blame for it? You can still take control of it and turn it around. Never blame others for the situation you are in, accept that you are in control of your life, stop dwelling on it, find a solution and then move on. If you have made a mistake, admit it, find a solution and move on.

Learn from negativity

Some of the biggest and most important lessons in life are how we react to failures or negative situations. The more you take

negativity as a learning experience, the less you will allow it to affect your life. This will lead you to look on the bright side and press on with challenges ahead.

Emphasise the positive

If you want to remove negativity from your life, speak, act and think positively. The next time you are tempted to say something negative like “I can’t” or “I hate,” take a breath and try to re-phrase your statement without the negative words.

Retrain your brain

The more you react negatively to yourself, the more that negativity will become a part of you and your personality. Nurture positive thoughts instead. Eventually, thinking positively will become natural to you.

Find an outlet

Release your negative energy instead of holding on to it. For many people, exercise is an ideal outlet to get it out of your system as your body gets a boost of endorphins that can improve your mood.

Photos: iStock

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Roma is a black-and-white film about life in Mexico City in the 1970s. PHOTO: NETFLIX

Roma and its reach

Streaming service Netflix offers clues on who has seen the Oscar contender directed by Alfonso Cuarón

LOS ANGELES • For weeks, Roma, the Netflix movie directed by Alfonso Cuarón, has occupied an odd position in Hollywood: both omnipresent and mysterious.

The combination of Cuarón's powerful film-making and Netflix's marketing muscle has pushed the drama about Mexico City life in the 1970s to the front of the Oscar race.

Everywhere you turn in the movie capital, or so it seems, people are discussing the merits of Roma or gazing at a Netflix advertisement playing up the film's 10 Oscar nominations.

Yet, the unique way Roma was released – a three-week exclusive run in theatres before arriving online, with Netflix refusing to disclose ticket sales – has left Cuarón's film encircled in questions. Just who is watching it? And where?

For the first time, Netflix is offering bits of information about the Roma audience and big-screen rollout, putting to bed the notion that the film received only a token release in theatres.

"The theatrical release has been way beyond even my highest expectations," Cuarón said.

The director said Netflix had initially committed to theatrical release in about seven countries. Roma has now played in 41.

In total, Roma has appeared in 1,100 theatres around the world since it was released on Nov 21, according to Netflix.

About 250 of those locations have been in the United States, where the film continues to run despite its availability in living rooms and on smartphones. Netflix released Roma on its global streaming platform (190 countries) on Dec 14.

In some cases, Netflix has paid theatres to show the film in a contentious practice that is the equivalent of self-publishing in cinema.

One week ago, Roma played in 100 theatres in the US; 45 of those were new, including locations in Wisconsin, Maine and Pennsylvania, according to Netflix.

Theatres in 12 cities have played the movie in 70mm format, a premium film format associated with Hollywood spectacles of the 1950s and 1960s.

Roma may be playing in more theatres than expected, but streaming remains its primary home.

Netflix declined to say how Roma has performed online in the US, but said it had caught fire in Mexico: Cuarón's film has been viewed on 50 per cent of Netflix's Mexico accounts, or nearly four million, ranking as the service's second most popular original movie in the country, behind Bird Box.

To count as a "view", at least 70 per cent of the movie must be streamed, Netflix said.

The service's lack of transparency about viewer information has been met by howls of protest by competitors, who say there is no credibility to the data that seeps out because there is no independent verification or context.

In particular, the streaming giant has enraged art-film distributors by keeping box-office figures for Roma under wraps.

One person who has been publicly critical is Mr John Fithian, president of the National Association of Theatre Owners, who contends that the company is giving Roma a theatrical run as part of a disingenuous effort to court Oscar voters and make Cuarón happy.

"In its pursuit of prestige films and film-makers, Netflix has had to turn to the theatrical space that it has too often denigrated," he wrote in a recent column in Variety.

The theatrical footprint for Roma is tiny by blockbuster standards.

Bohemian Rhapsody, the Queen biopic, rolled out on 4,000 screens in North America last November and has played at more than 10,000 locations worldwide over the course of its run.

But Roma is not a Hollywood movie. It is an unhurried black-and-white film with characters who speak Spanish and Mixtec.

By foreign-language film standards, its theatrical release has been respectable.

The Polish period romance, Cold War, for instance, has played in 217 theatres in the US since arriving on Dec 21, generating US\$2.1 million (\$\$2.8 million) in ticket sales. The film expanded to roughly 275 locations last Friday.

Netflix cobbled together a theatrical run for Roma despite opposition from the biggest theatre owners.

Most movies still arrive in the same way they have for decades: first in theatres, for an exclusive run of about 90 days, then in homes. AMC Theatres, Regal Cinemas and other theatre companies worry that shortening that period will hurt their already-fragile business. NYTIMES



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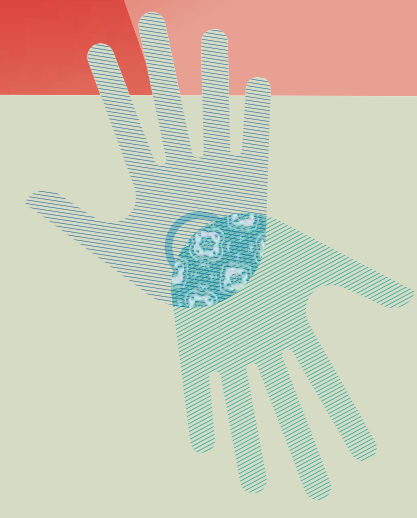
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Digging into emotions

Singer-songwriter Eve Ai's intense love life inspires songs with deep feelings

Jan Lee

Taiwanese singer-songwriter Eve Ai readily admits that she can be a demanding and stressful person to date.

The 31-year-old pop singer, who has been in a relationship with a man outside the entertainment industry for about three years, says that is because she is "very intense in love".

But that intensity helps her to produce emotional love songs.

In a telephone interview with The Straits Times from Taipei, she says: "I treat every day that I love someone like the last day that I'm loving them, so I'm really intense."

The singer got her start in the fifth season of reality singing competition Super Idol in 2010 and released her latest album Fade To Exist in December.

Ai, who wrote the lyrics and music for all the songs on the album (except one track which was co-composed with Taiwanese singer-songwriter Evan Yo), says: "It's a very deep, very emotional album. Sometimes, it's important to dig into those feelings."

Forever Young, the album's lead single, is one such song and it clocks in at over five minutes.

"It's a relatively quieter track and it's pretty long too so I did worry if radio stations might be reluctant to play it, but they did, so I'm really grateful," she says.

Although her recent releases have been somewhat sombre, she promises an energetic performance when she takes the stage for a two-night show at the Resorts World Convention Centre with Mandopop queen A-mei and her 18-year-old newcomer niece Anna later this week.

She says: "I can't wait to let myself go and perform some 'high' songs and belt some high notes in Singapore."

The three of them are with record label EMI, which Ai joined last year.

Is she afraid of being overshadowed by A-mei during the concert?

"It's actually comforting being with her. Although she's truly the Mandopop queen, she's very nice to us younger singers. She's like a big sister that I can rely on and when I'm beside her, I have fewer worries – I can just be myself and sing," says Ai.

And she says of Anna: "She's a little ball of sunshine, she's really energetic and fun."

Ai, who last visited Singapore 10 years ago when she was a university student, is excited to return.

"I love Singapore's food. In fact, I like Hainanese chicken rice so much that I tried to cook it in Taiwan, but failed. I just couldn't get the rice to be so fragrant, so I'm just going to eat it in Singapore."

The Best Female Mandarin Singer at the 2017 Golden Melody Awards for Talk About Eve hopes that her latest album will be nominated this year, although she says that the competition is stiff.

Popular and critically acclaimed singers such as Singapore's Tanya Chua, Hong Kong's Sandy Lam and Taiwan's Jolin Tsai and Cheer Chen all released new albums recently.

Ai says: "It's a very strong mix of female vocalists this time round and they are all people I look up to and admire."

"Of course, I hope to be nominated, but at this juncture, I'm just glad that I'm even part of this really tough race."

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Eve Ai is looking forward to performing in Singapore as she loves its food, especially Hainanese chicken rice. PHOTO: YOUNG HOPE INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY

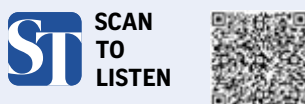


ST PHOTO: RICHARD NEWLOVE

Bookmark This! Dreams and a drowning Bangkok

Join Life reporters Olivia Ho (left) and Toh Wen Li (right) in this new monthly podcast by The Straits Times in which they talk about books in the headlines and recommend new reads.

In this episode, they dip into dreams and a drowning city in Singaporean poet Cyril Wong's phantasmagoric collection *Oneiros*, recently reprinted by Math Paper Press, and Thai author Pitchaya Sudbanthad's debut novel *Bangkok Wakes To Rain*, out later this month, which jumps through time from the 19th century to a post-diluvian future.



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Shoplifters director exposes Japan's dark side

TOKYO • As befits a director whose movies chart the untidiness of Japanese family life, the office of Hirokazu Kore-eda is cluttered with piles of papers, books, photographs, videocassettes and CDs.

But it is the dozens of Frankenstein dolls perched around the room that really capture his emotional point of view.

"I love Frankenstein," Kore-eda, 56, said. "He is just so melancholy."

The director, whose latest work, *Shoplifters*, has received an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film and has been a box-office hit in Japan, specialises in stories about people who endure almost unbearable sadness.

In *Shoplifters*, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival last May, a group of outcasts rescue a little girl from abusive parents and induct her into their clan of petty thievery.

For a while, their ragtag clan seems more authentically connected than some families that share DNA.

Kore-eda said his films represent an implicit criticism of modern Japan. They tackle themes of isolation and social invisibility, as well as the numbing of souls that can come with professional success.

Nobody Knows (2004), one of Kore-eda's best-known films internationally before *Shoplifters*, is the story of four young children abandoned by their mother in their small Tokyo apartment.

In *Like Father, Like Son*, which won the Jury Prize in Cannes in 2013, two sets of parents learn that their six-year-old sons were switched at birth in the hospital, leading to agonising decisions that expose class divisions between the families and leave them psychologically battered.

"I don't portray people or make movies where viewers can easily



find hope," said Kore-eda.

"Some people want to see characters who grow and become stronger over the course of a film. But I don't want to make such a movie."

"It's such a lie," he added.

"And I don't want to tell a lie."

Kore-eda's vision is starkly at odds with that of Japan's leaders.

With the economy enjoying modest expansion after decades of stagnation, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in a speech at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos last month, pronounced a "long-awaited positive feedback cycle" and trumpeted Japan as having a "hope-driven economy".

Such rosy rhetoric belies the demographic challenges that Japan faces, with a declining and rapidly ageing population and mounting labour shortages.

It also overlooks the insecurity that many Japanese feel working in contract or part-time jobs with scant chance of advancement.

A little over one in six people live in poverty. And those who hold full-time jobs are often forced to toil for such long hours that some are dying from overwork.

Against this backdrop, Kore-eda has diagnosed a society where local ties have weakened and nationalism is on the rise, particularly under Mr Abe's right-leaning government.

So when, after he won the Palme d'Or, the country's education minister invited Kore-eda for a congratulatory meeting, the director demurred.

"I didn't get the point of why they were trying to congratulate me," he said. "I don't think it's right for the government and movie-makers to get too close. So I wanted to keep a distance from the government."

Shoplifters was made in part with government funding and some critics have bashed the director as anti-Japan or hypocritical.

"You took the money and then say that you want to keep a distance" from the government, wrote one blogger. "What a convenient excuse you make."

Kore-eda told newspaper Mainichi Shimbun that he was grateful for the public money, but viewed it as a subsidy from taxpayers rather than a grant from any particular administration.

But while his movies tend to be downbeat, they do offer slivers of optimism and moments of impish humour.

Does he still have hope for his country?

He paused for several beats before saying: "I have not thrown away hope." **NYTIMES**



Hirokazu Kore-eda's (above) *Shoplifters*, which stars Lily Franky (far left) and Jyo Kairi, has received an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Meditation and deserts stir his creative juices

Electronic musician Jon Hopkins turned to these after completing an exhausting global tour

Eddino Abdul Hadi
Music Correspondent

British composer and musician Jon Hopkins released one of the most feted electronic music albums of 2018, *Singularity*, a work that he says is the product of his subconscious mind.

Speaking to The Straits Times ahead of his return to Singapore for a concert at the Capitol Theatre on Wednesday, the 39-year-old says that he turned to meditation to help with his creative process for his fifth album.

It helped him to overcome creative barriers, especially as he had just completed an exhausting global tour for his previous album, *Immunity* (2013). He also spent a year in California and took inspiration from the American state's vast desert and rural areas.

"What happens when you write that way is that all your experiences in life get summed up, in a way, in the music you write," he says over the telephone from Sydney.

Critics and fans have been effusive in their acclaim for the resulting work, a masterpiece of hypnotic beats and ambient sounds.

Singularity is in the running for Best Dance/Electronic Album at the Grammy Awards taking place this morning, Singapore time.

It is his first Grammy nomination but Hopkins says he will not be attending the ceremony in Los Angeles as he is currently on the Australian leg of his global tour.

"I think it's pretty mental," he says of the nomination, which sees

him going up against acts such as French duo Justice and American producer/DJ Tokimonsta.

"But I wouldn't want to cancel a show just to go there. I think it's a great honour... but I'll probably only find out (the results) after I walk off stage."

British music press NME gave the album a perfect score, calling it "a near-perfect trip and one that confirms Hopkins' status as one of the genre's brightest talents", while electronic music fans on popular online forum Reddit named him Artist Of The Year and awarded Song Of The Year for a *Singularity* track, *Emerald Rush*.

Though known for his electronic work, Hopkins is classically trained and studied piano at London's Royal College of Music.

As a child, he was into synthpop acts such as Depeche Mode, Pet Shop Boys and various other genres of electronic music.

He released his debut album, *Opalescent*, in 2001, and went on to collaborate regularly with ambient music icon Brian Eno as well as popular British band Coldplay. He has worked on the soundtrack albums for two films: 2010 science-fiction flick *Monsters* and 2013 drama *How I Live Now*.

He has performed here before, including at the Substation in 2012 and the Laneway Festival in 2015, but the upcoming Capitol Theatre gig will be his biggest here.

He says: "I'm hoping that I can get people on their feet, even if they are all seated. I did a show at the Royal Festival Hall (in London) in 2014, which is a concert hall, and by the end, all the audience members were dancing at their seats. That's what I'm hoping for in Singapore."

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British musician Jon Hopkins' 2018 album *Singularity* has been nominated for Best Dance/Electronic Album at the Grammy Awards.
PHOTO: STEVE GULLICK

What happens when you write that way is that all your experiences in life get summed up, in a way, in the music you write.



JON HOPKINS on turning to meditation to help with his creative process for his fifth album.

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Obituary

Finney's roles ranged from playboy to pope

LONDON • Director Ridley Scott got slapped, all because of Albert Finney's "fault".

The British actor (right), who died last Thursday at 82 of a chest infection in London, had portrayed a charming bad boy in the movie *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning* (1960), which Scott had caught.

"When I left the theatre, I even tried to behave like him for a week – I recall getting slapped a couple of times that week," said Scott in a warm tribute to Finney's legacy.

Finney, who defined an era's rage and frustration in dramas of blue-collar realism and social revolt and went on to find stardom in Hollywood, was a frequent nominee for an Oscar and Britain's Bafta.

He was a star as comfortable in movies like *Tom Jones* (1963), *Murder On The Orient Express* (1974) and *Erin Brockovich* (2000) as he was on the classical British stage.

He first came to wide attention alongside contemporaries like Alan Bates and Tom Courtenay, actors collectively known as "angry young men". Together, they helped turn Britain's gaze towards gritty industrial landscapes, where a generation of disaffected youth railed against the class system.

Trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he had applied to on the advice of his school teacher, Finney first gained notice on-screen in *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning*. In the gritty study of alienation and anger, he played a factory worker juggling relationships with two women.

Throughout his career, in roles



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ranging from playboy to pope and from Hamlet to Winston Churchill, he had a way of dominating any scene in which he appeared.

Early on, *Time* magazine lauded him as "the most brilliant actor of his age in the English-speaking world".

He was sometimes proclaimed as heir to esteemed actors Laurence Olivier and Marlon Brando.

But in 2007, Finney dropped out of sight, disclosing only in 2011 that he had been struggling for four years with cancer.

After his return to acting, he took small parts in thriller *The Bourne Legacy* and James Bond movie *Skyfall*, both in 2012.

Finney, who was born on May 9, 1936, in Salford, England, and whose father was a bookie, taking illegal bets on horse races, was nominated five times for an Oscar, four for best actor. But he never won.

He made a point of not attending the award ceremonies. "It's a very long evening and not exactly my

idea of a good night out," he said.

Finney's aversion to such accolades extended even to Britain's own system of medals, knighthoods and peerages.

In 2000, he turned down an opportunity to become Sir Albert Finney. He said the honours system was a way of "perpetuating snobbery".

He preferred wealth to accolades, according to his biographer Quentin Falk.

"At the turn of the 1960s, Finney was the screen's incarnation of the new working-class hero," Falk wrote in *Albert Finney In Character*, published in 1992 and republished in 2015.

"In the theatre, he was barely 20 when he was hailed as the 'new Olivier'. Yet, instead of pursuing either mantle, he became a millionaire..."

Falk added: "To some, he is still the leading actor of his generation; to others, though, he has suffered an ambition bypass.

"To even severer critics, he appears to have remained cheerfully indolent, almost wilfully failing to fulfil the remarkable early promise."

But Daniel Craig, who played Bond in *Skyfall*, remains a fan of Finney's work.

"The world has lost a giant. Wherever Albert is now, I hope there are horses and good company," he said.

Finney's marriages to actresses Jane Wenham and Anouk Aimee ended in divorce.

Survivors include Pene Delmage, his wife since 2006; a son from his first marriage; and two grandchildren. WASHINGTON POST, NYTIMES

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Abdulattif Abdullah and Sakinah Dollah (both above) reprise their roles as Vinod and Saloma in *Off Centre* by The Necessary Stage. PHOTO: TUCKYS PHOTOGRAPHY

Off Centre is still spot on

The issues highlighted in the play on mental illness are sadly fresh even after 26 years

REVIEW/THEATRE

OFF CENTRE
The Necessary Stage
Victoria Theatre/Thursday

Akshita Nanda

Last September, the National Council of Social Service released a YouTube video as part of its Beyond The Label movement to address the stigma about persons with mental-health conditions.

In the video, interviewers met strangers and asked them to share what they thought about those with mental illnesses, including their (un)employability and potential danger to society.

The interviewer was always either recovering from or dealing with mental illness. Interviewees were shocked by the revelation,

probably because the person across the table looked so ordinary.

No one meeting Saloma or Vinod for the first time would be surprised if told that these characters have mental-health conditions.

Drawn from real life, the protagonists of *Off Centre* are different from the ensemble surrounding them. They are too loud, too intense, too weepy, just off in some way that sparks the primitive hindbrain.

That is the point of this vital, well-respected 26-year-old play written by Haresh Sharma and directed by Alvin Tan.

Saloma, who has schizophrenia, and Vinod, who has manic and

depressive episodes, do not fit into society, though they attempt to do so with medical intervention and behavioural therapy. Is the problem theirs alone or a systemic issue that must be addressed?

The play is dated only in its pop-culture references. The issues it highlights are sadly fresh.

Those with mental-health conditions still feel they should keep these secret as it might hurt their chances of employment or promotion.

There is no happy pill that can be popped to solve all problems, either. For many, it is a choice between enduring crippling anxiety, for example, or the physical side effects that come with medication.

Returning to the stage after a quarter-century, Abdulattif Abdullah and Sakinah Dollah are harrowing as Vinod and Saloma, characters they co-created.

They are pitch perfect as suffering youth and their alternating ascent from and descent into mental hell is all too believable, if painfully protracted (perhaps the script was presented in its entirety for the sake of the students using it as an O-level literature text this year and next).

The actors' intensity is out of sync with the polished restraint of the rest of the ensemble but that just makes the protagonists more

obviously outsiders.

The play honestly shows the prejudices and misinformation that make life harder for people like Vinod and Saloma.

Vinod's platoon commander (Brendon Fernandez) and absent parents seem to think he needs to shake it off and move on. Saloma's mother, Mak (Aidli Mosbit), is convinced prayer will drive out the devil that has possessed her daughter.

Some do offer support, such as Vinod's sympathetic sergeant (a poised Nicholas Bloodworth) and friend Charlie (a heart-warming turn by Joshua Lim) but one is limited by army structure and the other pushed away. What if someone does not want to be helped? That is another agonising point made by the play.

An isolated, withdrawn Saloma ends the production but the conclusion is left in the hands of the audience – to walk away, enlightened, or to act immediately?

A surprising number choose to hug the actress on their way out or comfort the character.

The play hits its target dead centre once again.

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• *Off Centre* is sold out.

When ballet fans go overboard

WASHINGTON • Isabella Boylston, a principal ballerina with American Ballet Theatre (ABT), eats a lot of pasta.

Her love of pasta has even inspired a New York restaurant to create a noodle dish in her honour.

But the ultimate pasta tribute came from one of Boylston's fans, who was waiting at the Metropolitan Opera House stage door after a performance one night to present her with a silver necklace, strung with a sterling farfalle.

"I opened it and started laughing because I thought it was so creative," Boylston said recently by telephone from her dressing room, where she was preparing to rehearse the ballet, *Harlequinade*.

"It's a nice lucky charm."

Receiving gifts from fans is another kind of performance for many dancers, particularly ballet dancers.

Ballet incites a specific kind of response from its audience, a drive for a direct, personal connection.

You see this during the bows at the end of a show, when the fondest fans might toss flowers on the stage to honour a great star.

This tradition started in the early 19th century, when ballerina Marie Taglioni inspired bombardments of roses.

Ballerinas ever since have braced themselves for these fragrant misfires and the occasional wild pitch.

Boylston said when she was a new member of the corps de ballet, she witnessed a flying sunflower smack celebrated ballerina Nina Ananiashvili in the head during curtain calls after *Swan Lake*.

"It landed in the dead centre of her forehead," Boylston said. "She just charmingly picked it up and made a

laughing gesture. It was cute."

Such are the perils of public excitement for the dancer, who must gracefully navigate between the pros and cons of fame.

Occasionally, the cons can have more troubling consequences than a floral bruising.

A stalker once sent Boylston threatening messages on social media and began waiting for her outside the theatre. The police eventually intervened.

"It's wonderful to see the fans at the stage door, but you can be in a vulnerable position," she said. "People feel like they know you. And we don't have the level of security that Beyonce has."

For most dancers, contact with fans is less dramatic, although many marvelled at some fans' inclination to get too close.

ABT principal dancer Daniil Simkin said he has had to fend off hugs and kisses, when he would much rather receive a simple compliment.

Alessandra Ferri, the Italian ballerina and international star who performs with ABT and the Royal Ballet, wonders why some ballet fans seek physical contact.

"Some people want to touch you, to come close and grab you," Ferri said. "Maybe because we are not totally human on stage, because we fly, you know? Also, dance is a physical thing."

More often, public admiration has its rewards and some of them are magnificent.

One long-time fan in Paris presented Ferri with an Hermes Kelly bag, that totem of prestige and patience. Another in Milan gave her an antique gold brooch.

She has received paintings of herself; teddy bears dressed to

match her costumes; and acres of flowers, particularly on big nights, such as her last *Romeo And Juliet* with ABT, when she temporarily retired in 2007, and when she returned to the stage a few years later at Teatro Alla Scala.

And it is not only ballerinas who are fussed over by the public.

"This guy comes up to me at the stage door, looking like he's straight out of a film noir, full trench coat, cap, scarf, all dressed in black," said San Francisco Ballet principal Joseph Walsh.

The man gushed praise in a thick Russian accent, then pulled a few vodka bottles out of his coat and pressed them on Walsh. Night after night, he would show up with more vodka. Walsh does not drink vodka. But what are you going to do?

Another fan once gave him bootleg DVDs of Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

"He said, 'You should study these,'" Walsh said. "I was like, 'Wow. I'm going to take that as a gift, but maybe it's not?'"

For Argentina-born former ABT principal Paloma Herrera, the effusive thanks she would receive from fans left her baffled.

"What do you thank me for? I want to say thank you to you," she said. "I never understood. I had to thank the people who came and watched. I was so grateful for them."

In the end, that is what stays with the dancers: gratitude for those who have been with them in darkness, for those to whom the theatre is a place of worship, who take the art seriously and who wait patiently, late into the night, simply for the chance to make their bond known. WASHINGTON POST

Exclusively for subscribers of The Straits Times

Asian Masters cooking demonstration by chef Selamat Susanto

Asian Masters returns for its seventh edition from March 1, 2019 till Feb 29, 2020 and celebrates the best of Asian gastronomy.

The programme line-up includes a series of cooking demonstrations by renowned chefs from top Asian restaurants.



The Straits Times is giving away 30 pairs of passes to this session on March 2 at 10am.

HOW TO WIN

1. Download the SPH Rewards app.
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This cooking demonstration by chef Selamat Susanto and hosted by ST senior food correspondent Wong Ah Yoke is part of Asian Masters 2019. True or False?

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CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
10.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (V)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Body And Soul 6 (IE)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (CC) (V)
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
7.30 Little Big Shots US 3 (PG) (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 With Highlights From Parliament
9.45 Hands That Shaped The Nation: The Merdeka Generation (IE)
10.15 Avenue 14 (PG13) (D)
11.10 Grimm 6 (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Code Of Law 4 (PG13) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-0 7 (PG) (D)
3.10 Lethal Weapon (PG13) (D)
4.10 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 3-Plus-1 4 (V)
7.00 Comfort Food Recipes 2 (Chinese New Year Specials) (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)

9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Food and Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Body SOS 7 (PG) (CC) (V)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 Focus (CC) (CA)
2.00 Beijing Opera Cats (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Old Taste Detective (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight With Highlights From Parliament
10.45 Hands that Shaped the Nation: The Merdeka Generation (Debut) (CC) (IE)
11.15 Princess Agents (PG13) (D)
AM
12.15 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.15 Super Taste 12 (V)
2.15 Fiery Passion (D)
4.10 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Markets In Asia (CC) (IE)
4.00 Find Me A Singaporean 3 (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Blue Tick (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight With Highlights From Parliament
11.45 Blue Tick (PG) (CC) (D)
AM
12.40 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
6.30 Money Mind
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Trump's Showdown

11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Blueprint For Survival
2.00 News Now
4.02 Wild City
5.00 News Now
7.02 Blueprint For Survival (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Undercover Asia 6 (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Blueprint For Survival
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Money Mind
1.02 Undercover Asia 6
2.00 News Now
2.30 Once A Refugee
3.02 Wild City
4.00 News Now
4.30 Once A Refugee
5.02 Undercover Asia 6
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Aasai Aasaiya - Cooking For Love (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Thedal - Star Search 2016 (V)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Raama Seetha (PG) (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (CC) (Cul)
7.30 Mella Thiranthatu Katavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ms V Supreme 2019 (CC) (V)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (CC) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Maalai Maalai Vasantham (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (Encore)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Tip The Mouse (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (P)

11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)
2.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (S)
6.00 OddBods (HD) (S)
6.30 Basic Mini-tary Training (S)
7.00 The Horse Dancer (M)
9.00 ATP 250: Montpellier 2019 (Sports)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 BoBoiBoy Galaxy (HD) (S)
6.30 Apa Rasa? (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Dansa Mania (CC) (V)
9.30 Mak Cun 4 (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Bingit (PG) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

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TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
Your hard work finally pays off. Take time to enjoy the fruit of your labour.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
You get so wrapped up in the creative process that you cannot perceive the passage of time.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Make sure you are not getting frustrated too easily as things will get better soon.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Your ability to clean up to-do-lists and tackle old chores is outstanding.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
You want a lot right now, so much that you might come across to others as greedy.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
A new place to eat or a new outfit can make the difference between awful and awesome.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Let go of whatever has been holding you back lately - you have more charm than anyone can handle.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
It is essential that you are as flexible as you can be - things are looking up for you.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
If you tackle those responsibilities, they will not get in your way later on.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
You are in touch with the people around you and should find that your energy keeps them happy.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
You need to make a few changes if you want to get anything done.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
Make your intentions known - at least as far as your love life is concerned.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Joshi's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM
MONEY FM 89.3
AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.17am/7.21pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 11.45am/-

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 2.48am (2.8m), 8.45am (1.1m), 2.45pm (2.7m), 8.52pm (1m). Desaru: 2.31am (2.6m), 8.28am (1.4m), 2.30pm (2.5m), 8.33pm (1.3m). Port Dickson: 4.29am (0.6m), 10.06am (2.2m), 4.19pm (0.4m), 10.29pm (2.4m). Mersing: 2.01am (2.8m), 8.10am (1.5m), 2.12pm (2.5pm), 7.52pm (1.6m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 3.22am (2.7m), 9.28am (1.1m), 3.33pm (2.5m), 9.26pm (1.2m). Desaru: 2.58am (2.5m), 9.05am (1.3m), 3.20pm (2.4m), 9.13pm (1.5m). Port Dickson: 5.07am (0.7m), 10.43am (2m), 4.52pm (0.5m), 11.21pm (2.2m). Mersing: 2.24am (2.7m), 8.43am (1.4m), 3.06pm (2.5m), 8.42pm (1.8m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
9.30 The Untold Story Of The 90s
11.20 Mountain Men 7
PM
12.15 The Curse Of Oak Island 4
1.10 The Pickers 12
2.05 Pawn Stars 19
2.35 Forged In Fire 5
3.30 Mountain Men 7
4.25 The Untold Story Of The 90s
6.15 Swamp People 8
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 The Pickers 9
9.55 Counting Cars 7
10.50 Detroit Steel
11.45 The Curse Of Oak Island 4

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
10.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
11.00 Atlanta Plastic 2
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 The Hunt For The I-5 Killer
3.35 The Rap Game 3
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2
7.00 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
8.00 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 My Christmas Prince
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
10.00 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.00 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.30 Super 8
PM
1.20 Geostorm (NC16)
3.05 Muppet Treasure Island
4.45 Tom And Jerry: Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory
6.05 Planes: Fire & Rescue
7.30 Gladiator (NC16)
10.00 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.00 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.30 High Maintenance 3 (M18)
AM
12.00 The Beguiled (2017)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
9.30 Miss Evers' Boys
11.30 Big Momma's House 2 (NC16)
PM
1.10 Tango One (NC16)
3.00 Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope
5.05 Tequila Sunrise
7.00 The Saint

9.00 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
10.00 From Dusk Till Dawn (M18)
11.45 The Last Boyscout (NC16)
AM
1.25 Hollywood Homicide (PG)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
9.15 Downy (HD)
10.15 I Am The Actor (HD)
PM
12.15 Still Loving You (HD)
1.30 Signal (HD)
2.45 Where Are We Going, Dad? 5 (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Downy (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)
9.30 Hong Kong Neighbourhood Gems (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
10.00 ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships: Gala Exhibition
PM
12.30 Spirit Of Yachting 2018: Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race (Alive & Kicking)
1.00 ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships: Women's Short Programme
5.00 Motorsports: FIA World RallyCross Championships 2018 Round 11: Germany Highlights
6.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018
7.00 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered
7.30 ATP 500 ABN Amro World Tennis Tournament: Day 1 Session 1
11.30 Tennis: Deuce
AM
12.00 Horse Racing: FEI Equestrian World

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
10.00 National Basketball League Round 17: Adelaide 36ers Vs Melbourne United
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League: Hong Kong Eastern Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas
2.30 Football: EFL Championships 2018 Matchday 31: Norwich City Vs Ipswich Town
4.30 Magazine: Laguna Phuket Triathlon 2018
5.30 National Basketball League Round 17: Adelaide 36ers Vs Melbourne United
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
9.00 Rugby: HSBC Sevens Series Round 3: Hamilton Highlights
9.30 Asean Basketball League: Singapore Slingers Vs Saigon Heat
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Football: EFL Championships 2018 Matchday 31: Norwich City Vs Ipswich Town

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzly And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernoobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 Craig Of The Creek
3.00 Rat-A-Tat
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Ben 10 Challenge
6.30 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzly And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 MacGyver 2
6.50 Seal Team
7.40 Team Ninja Warrior
9.25 MacGyver 2
10.20 Seal Team
11.10 Asia's Got Talent 3
PM
1.10 Quantico 3
2.00 Team Ninja Warrior
2.50 MacGyver 2
3.45 Seal Team
4.35 MacGyver 3
5.30 Seal Team 2
6.25 Instinct
7.15 Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders
8.05 Don't Blink
9.05 Hawaii Five-0 9
9.55 Lakeview Terrace
11.55 Bad Boys

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 The Carbonaro Effect 2
6.50 Major Crimes 5
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
8.25 Person Of Interest 4
9.15 The Flash 4
10.00 The Carbonaro Effect 2
10.50 Almost Genius
11.40 San Andreas
PM
1.45 The Big Bang Theory 9
2.05 Friends 9
2.30 The Carbonaro Effect 2

Dolly Parton lights up Grammy run-up event

LOS ANGELES • Dolly Parton is not afraid to get something off her chest. “All of my life, I have been known for two things. Well, not them,” the well-endowed singer joked in a bawdy acceptance speech after becoming the first country artist to receive the MusiCares Person of the Year award.

“I’ve also been known as a singer and songwriter too,” she added at the event in the run-up to the Grammy Awards (this morning, Singapore time).

In an evening of all-star musical performances in Los Angeles last Friday to honour Parton for her music and philanthropy, the eight-time Grammy winner got the biggest laughs at the 29th annual gala for MusiCares, which helps members of the industry in need.

Parton, whose career started with appearances at 10 on radio stations in her native Tennessee, began her speech with a joke that made light of her backcountry roots.

“Of course, you know we hillbillies need MusiCares too,” she said. “We may not have sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll, but two out of three ain’t bad.”

Parton, 73, also appeared to touch on some of the concerns of the #MeToo movement and sexual misconduct in entertainment when she described entering the music business when it was a “man’s world”.

“Buddy, I had a ball,” she said to more laughs. “Because I have actually worked with so many wonderful men and I’ve never met a man whom I didn’t like and I’ve never met a man whose ass I couldn’t kick if he didn’t treat me with the right respect.”

To gasps and laughs, Parton then described her feelings at seeing the likes of Willie Nelson, Katy Perry, Mavis Staples and Garth Brooks perform her songs at the gala.

“Watching them is sort of like watching porn,” she said. “You’re not personally involved, but you still get off on it. At my age, you take anything you can get,” she cracked.

Parton has sold more than 100 million records and helped popularise country music outside the United States, often succeeding in crossing over into pop music.

Her charity work owes much to her admiration for her father, who laboured in tobacco fields and construction sites and could not read.



Country artist Dolly Parton (left) receives the MusiCares Person of the Year award on stage with singers Linda Ronstadt (centre) and Emmylou Harris (far left). PHOTO: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

The Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, founded in 1995, has mailed more than 100 million books to children in the US and other countries.

Parton will also be honoured with another tribute at the Grammy Awards. For the second consecutive year, black hip-hop artists are

leading the pack, but observers are still wondering if nomination success can translate into wins.

Rapper Kendrick Lamar – who won a Pulitzer Prize for his album *Damn.* but has yet to snare a Grammy for *Album of the Year* – earned eight nods while Canadian

rapper Drake snagged seven.

Women artists scored nominations in all the top categories after being largely muted a year ago. Rapper Cardi B, pop diva Lady Gaga, pop futurist Janelle Monae and folk rocker Brandi Carlile are among the front runners. REUTERS

Ranveer Singh shines spotlight on hip-hop



BERLIN • Actor Ranveer Singh (left) took nine months to get ready and is now singing the praises of Hindustani hip-hop.

And he feels India could be on the cusp of a musical revolution with the exposure from his new movie premiering at the Berlin Film Festival.

Gully Boy, directed by Zoya Akhtar, tells the tale of a student who lives in a slum and ends up temporarily substituting his injured father as a chauffeur for a wealthy family.

He discovers a talent for rapping and uses it to vent his anger about poverty and the chasm between rich and poor.

“This film is something that takes a genre of music that has essentially been underground in India so far and brings it to the mainstream,” Singh said.

“I want this to be the beginning of something because I really think Hindustani hip-hop is a revolution.

It’s more than just music. It’s a musical and social revolution,” he added.

Singh said he grew up listening to rap music and it “feels amazing” to have recorded five songs for the film’s soundtrack.

He did the rapping in the movie and said it took nine months before he felt camera-ready.

He initially wanted to become an actor to be a virtuous hero who stands up for what is right, but Akhtar had brought out a part of him on screen that was usually reserved for his friends and family.

“Zoya kind of very literally and metaphorically peels away all of those layers to kind of tap into a very real, very authentic side of me ... a little bit more quiet, more reserved, more introverted and more internally feeling sensitive, vulnerable,” he said.

The movie is among 400 screening at the festival, which runs until Sunday. REUTERS

On social media



CAN BUCKINGHAM MAKE A COMEBACK?: Fans of former Fleetwood Mac singer-guitarist Lindsey Buckingham fear that he may never be able to sing again. The concern arose after the 69-year-old had open heart surgery that left him with damaged vocal cords.

Over the weekend, his wife Kristen (both left) posted online that he “is now recuperating at home and each day he is stronger than the last”.

“While he and his heart are doing well, the surgery resulted in vocal cord damage. While it is unclear if this damage is permanent, we are hopeful it is not.

“This past year has been a very stressful and difficult year for our family to say the least,” she wrote, alluding to Buckingham’s filing of a lawsuit over his axing from the band. The dispute was later settled.

“But despite all this, our gratitude for life trumps all obstacles we have faced at this moment. We feel so fortunate he’s alive. As does he. He looks forward to recovery and putting this behind him.” PHOTO: KRISTEN BUCKINGHAM/INSTAGRAM

#MeToo movement

Director Fatih Akin defends serial killer film



BERLIN • German director Fatih Akin (left) supports the #MeToo movement, but says it should not “create censorship”. His response comes in the wake of charges that his new film about a serial killer, The Golden Glove, exploits the female victims.

Akin insists it aims to grant “dignity” to both the killer and victims.

“We are living in a time in which the discussion about sexual violence is everywhere and that is justified,” he said at the Berlin film festival, where the picture premiered.

“But when you make a film about sexual violence, you have to show it,” he added.

Akin said he had no desire to “glorify” violence against women with the film’s scenes graphically depict-

ing sexual torture, murder and dismemberment which many viewers said left them feeling queasy.

He said he had shown the film to pimps he knew from his home town Hamburg’s red-light district, where the movie is set.

“You can talk to them until you’re blue in the face about how wrong violence against women is and #MeToo and it goes in one ear and out the other,” Akin said. “But if people who have committed violence against women say ‘(this movie’s) too brutal for me’, then maybe it’s naive, but I’m hopeful that the film will have an impact on them.”

Akin, who has billed the film a “horror movie”, based it on author Heinz Strunk’s novel of the same title, named for the seedy pub where

the real killer Fritz Honka met his victims.

Most were alcoholics who went home with men in exchange for liquor. Honka killed at least four women between 1970 and 1975 until their mutilated rotting corpses were discovered in his flat.

Akin employed psychologists on set to help the cast deal with any intense feelings that arose. Actress Margarethe Tiesel said she received “very dignified” treatment during difficult scenes.

“I did not feel used or helpless – I felt protected and we simply told the truth” in the film, she noted.

The Golden Glove is one of 17 films vying for the Golden Bear prize for best picture. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Show host A.J. Calloway accused of sexual assault

NEW YORK • Last June, Sil Lai Abrams, a writer and domestic violence awareness activist, said A.J. Calloway, a host on entertainment news show Extra, groped her breast and exposed himself to her in his car in 2006.

Last month, The Daily Beast published the accounts of two unnamed women who said Calloway, 44, had also sexually assaulted them.

One of them claimed that he had lain on top of her after a party and tried to undress her.

Last Saturday, The Hollywood Reporter reported that he had been suspended by Warner as it was preparing to publish more allegations against him. Calloway has been

with Extra since 2005 and has focused on interviewing celebrities around New York City.

Warner said when it became aware of the allegations, it investigated whether employees had been the victims. It said that as of last Saturday, it had not found evidence.

Abrams said the company’s response was insufficient and that it appeared to focus on Calloway’s actions in the workplace, instead of his conduct outside it.

He was arrested after the police investigated her 2006 allegation, according to The Hollywood Reporter, which said the case was dismissed on “procedural grounds”. NYTIMES



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